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EN GREAT COSMIC POWERS — S. SHANKARANARAYANAN

THE TEN GREAT COSMIC POWERS

(Daśa Mahāvidyās)

[illegible]

THE TEN GREAT COSMIC POWERS

(*DASA MAHĀVIDYĀS*)

S. SHANKARANARAYANAN

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To

SRI KAPALI SASTRIAR

at whose feet
I found the Light

PREFACE

In his classic exposition of *śri vidyā* and the *śri cakra*, Sri Shankaranarayanan has dwelt upon the manifestation of the Primal Divine Shakti in the form of this variegated, many-planed Universe. In the present work he explains the process of this manifestation. For, as he points out, creation is not a sudden precipitation; it is a graded self-revelation. The transcendent and ultimate Mother of the Universe puts out several Powers and Personalities of herself, each missioned to work out a particular truth of her Being. Of these, some are the major, Cardinal Powers, mentioned variously as Four, Six, Ten, Twelve etc., according to the standpoint of the Seers of old. The Tantra celebrates the Ten as the *mahā vidyās,* Great Sciences, that hold the creation in their celestial grasp.

What are these *mahāvidyās?* Why are they distinguished from one another though they all proceed from and lead to the same one Reality? The author explains with his usual lucidity: " Each is a particular Cosmic function and each leads to a special realisation of the One Reality. The might of Kali, the sound-force of Tara, the beauty and bliss of Sundari, the vast vision of Bhuvaneshwari, the effulgent charm of Bhairavi, the striking force of Chinnamasta, the silent inertness of Dhumavati, the paralysing power of Bhagalamukhi, the expressive play of Matangi and the concord and harmony of Kamalatmika are the various characteristics, the distinct manifestations of the Supreme Consciousness that has made this creation possible. The Tantra says that the Supreme can be realised at these various points."

The secrets of these vidyas are buried deep in Sastras and oral traditions. To Sri Shankaranarayanan we owe gratitude for his intuitive grasp of these fundamentals, deep learning and conscientious scholarship in working out the clues and the facility with which he has been able to link up the dateless past of the mystics with the actual present dominated by empirical Science. He also integrates this Thought of the Tantra with the Doctrine and Practice of *Life Divine* as presented by Sri Aurobindo in his Epic, *Sāvitri.*

It has been more than a delight to follow the author in his studies of the *daśa mahāvidyās* and I am doubly happy that with this publication a larger number of readers and seekers will share in this felicity.

M. P. Pandit.

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DISCIPLINES OF KNOWLEDGE

He had studied the Vedas. Like all *vaidiks* of his time he took to priesthood and was eking out a living. Driven by poverty he approached some one to teach him a Mantra for getting rich quickly. Having got the Mantra, he took his seat in the front courtyard of his house and began practising the repetition of the Mantra. Two hours would have passed and the Vaidik saw a beggar woman at his door. It was not an uncommon thing; he did not attempt to drive her away as he did not want his japa to be interrupted by some words spoken in between. The beggar woman who was in tatters stooped down, patiently untied the knots of a bundle of rags, took out the small coins kept there and before the Vaidik knew what she was doing, threw the coins at his feet. The Vaidik naturally was taken aback and began to remonstrate. "Why, you have been asking for this for the past two hours" said she and went her way. The Vaidik stopped repeating his Mantra in sheer disgust and vowed that never again would he go after such pursuits.

This incident which happened years ago is quoted here for the flood of light it throws on certain basic principles of Tantra Shastra. Evidently, the man contacted with the help of the formula given to him an entity or a spirit, a low class of deity which caught hold of the human vehicle of the beggar woman and within two hours made her part with the pittance she had in favour of the man. The deity responded quickly, as being in the lower rungs of the cosmic ladder nearest to the earth-plane it was within easy reach of human beings; and its power was limited to grant only so much of money to the one who called for its assistance.

The Tantra recognises the one Supreme Deity presiding over everything as the Highest, at the same time admitting the existence of various Gods and Goddesses. In the words of Sri Kapali Sastriar: "The sages of the Tantra do not see any inconsistency in the position, for they recognise that this creation is not a unitary system but a gradation of worlds spread over a rising tier of consciousness and planes and the various Gods and Goddesses are higher beings, powers and entities. deriving their authority from the Supreme to take their part and act or preside over their spheres of domain. There is a regular hierarchy of Gods some of whom are far above the highest heavens of human reach. But there are also Gods and Goddesses closer to the human level. They are more readily accessible to those who aspire to them and in some cases the seeker on the Tantric path looks to the aid and lead of these deities in his effort. They are endowed with capacities and powers beyond normal human possibility, but they are not all for that reason divine in nature. There are higher and lower classes of them, *ucca* and *kṣudra* Devatas. Those that are nearest to the earth-plane, swarming in the vital world overtopping the physical, are usually of the latter type. They respond very readily to the approaches of those who seek their help but they do so mainly for their own purpose, namely, to get hold of the particular human vehicle and convert it into a centre for their activity on the earth. They may and do answer the call of the seeker in the beginning but in the end they let him down, rather roughly, once their purpose is fulfilled. The seeker is misled, his inner progress comes to a standstill if it does not end in disaster. The Kshudra Devatas mislead the seeker with petty glamorous gifts, induce a false sense of progress and *siddhi*, prevent the dawn of real Jnana which would expose their whole game and succeed in enslaving the man for their purpose at the cost of his soul which is betrayed into misadventure ".[1]

But there are also entities of a higher order, benevolent deities, Uccha Devatas and as they occupy higher levels, the seeker has to make an effort to ascend to them. But they take the seeker on the path steadily and safely and ultimately do him the utmost good. There are still higher deities with cosmic functionings nearer to the Supreme Cosmic Godhead who presides over the myriad worlds that arc created. Then at the top of this pyramidal structure of the cosmos spreading over an ascending tier of consciousness, at the summit of the innumerable levels and planes of existence there are certain cardinal Godheads, so many facets of the One Truth, the Supreme Deity that correspond to the Brahman of the Upanishads. The spiritual disciplines leading to such cardinal Deities are known as Brahma Vidyas. These are also popular as Maha Vidyas, the great paths of discipline or Siddha Vidyas, the lines of quest where fulfilment is assured.

The Sanskrit word *vidyā* is formed from the root *vid* to know or to understand. Vidya means learning or knowledge and also denotes the way to understanding, the path of knowledge, the Teaching. The mystics, all over the world, in their quest for the highest knowledge followed certain paths, undertook certain disciplines which were kept secret and were revealed only in the esoteric hierarchy of master and disciple. In India, the Upanishads, the repository of ancient wisdom and secret knowledge, mention in the body of their texts certain Vidyas, disciplines of knowledge. It has to be remembered that the Upanishads are not merely texts outlining the philosophical speculations of our ancient seers, as popularly held, but also manuals of Sadhana, practical guide-books on spiritual quest. These are the records of jottings of the teaching the ancient seekers had from their masters, an *aid-mémoire* to remember the direct realisations they had in pursuing various disciplines of knowledge in their Sadhana. Likewise in the Tantra which is acclaimed as the great Sadhana Shastra, a practical manual, we find the great disciplines of knowledge, Maha Vidyas, occupying an important place. Especially where the Supreme is adored as the Great Primordial Goddess, the Tantra classifies the disciplines leading to the cardinal Deities as *daśa mahā vidyās,* the ten great paths of knowledge. These cardinal Deities are the ten outstanding personalities of the Divine Mother. Their great names are: Kali, Tara, Tripurasundari, Bhuvaneshwari, Tripura Bhairavi, Chinnamasta, Dhumavati, Bagalamukhi, Matangi and Kamalatmika.

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[1] Sidelgihts on the Tantra by Sri T. V. Kapali Sastriar.

What may be the precise significance of classifying the Vidyas into ten will be a difficult question to answer. But we can indicate the following: The Supreme Mother is the Transcendent Absolute ineffable immutable. In the act of creation, she subjects herself to time and space. Though the space is actually one vast stretch, for our grasp and understanding, we demarcate the indivisible and infinite Space into ten directions, east, west, south, north, south-east, south-west, north-east, north-west, above and below. Similarly the one infinite Mother is delineated as ten outstanding personalities. Again, knowledge is one and the consciousness is one and the same everywhere. But it is grasped and understood in ten different ways by the ten senses, skin, eye, ear, tongue, nose, mouth, foot, hand, anus and genital. Likewise, the one Truth is sensed in its ten different facets; the Divine Mother is adored and approached as the ten cosmic Personalities, Dasa Maha Vidyas.

Each of these ten great Vidyas is a Brahma Vidya. The Sadhaka of any one of these Vidyas attains ultimately, if his aspiration is such, the supreme purpose of life, *parama puruṣārtha* viz. self-realisation and God-realisation, realising the Goddess as not different from one's self. All these Vidyas are benevolent deities of the highest order and so do the utmost good to the seeker of the Vidya. For any one who takes to any of these ten Vidyas, the Sadhana proceeds on sound lines and is safe and sure. It is not necessary at the beginning for the aspirant to have as his goal the highest aim of life. His aim most probably is the fulfilment of his immediate wants and for that he approaches the Deity. Once an aspirant takes to the Deity, the Deity takes upon itself the Sadhana. This is the characteristic of these Maha Vidyas. Whatever the seeker desires the Divine Mother fulfils it. In the process his devotion to the Deity becomes stronger and stronger and he learns to look upon the Deity for even the most trivial things in life, seeks its guidance at every step and knows to wait on its grace. There starts a living concourse, a concrete intimacy between the devotee and the Deity which is so absorbing and so enthralling that all desires, all aims of the devotee with which he started the Sadhana pale into insignificance. The whole perspective becomes different and there comes about a change in the attitude of the Sadhaka to life and things. There come about visible signs of communion, concrete evidences of contact, irresistible proofs of the Presence and the unmistakable touches of the Divine's gracious hand in every happening and in every circumstance. What were at one time miracles become now common-place things and the whole life becomes a happy hastening towards the Supreme Goal.

Thus nothing short of Self-Realisation, *ātma sākṣātkāra* is the goal of these Vidyas. Of course much depends on the seeker and on his active participation. But even if the seeker stops in the middle of the path, he does not come to any harm. Only his progress is delayed. In the Sadhana there are many pitfalls. The baser emotions may hold sway or the ego may interfere at each stage. Once an aspirant has taken to any of these ten Vidyas, he has to succeed ultimately. He may fail in the present birth. The Vidya will make him take the thread of the Sadhana in the next birth and will continue to give the necessary push to the soul of the aspirant on its onward march. Even one step forward in the path of these Vidyas goes a long way towards the Goal. Nothing goes in vain. In fact, the Tantra categorically declares that only those who have been sufficiently prepared in the previous births can approach the precincts of these Vidyas. For them alone are these well-proven carefully laid-out paths. They are the chosen ones, the men with a mission, the indefatigable toilers on the uphill path of these disciplines of knowledge.

Because all these Vidyas lead to the ultimate Reality, it does not mean that they are all one and the same. Each Vidya is distinct and distinguishable from the other. Each is a particular Cosmic function and each leads to a special realisation of the One Reality. The might of Kali, the sound-force of Tara, the beauty and bliss of Sundari, the vast vision of Bhuvaneshwari, the effulgent charm of Bhairavi, the striking force of Chinnamasta, the silent inertness of Dhumavati, the paralysing power of Bagalamukhi, the expressive play of Matangi and the concord and harmony of Kamalatmika are the various characteristics, the distinct manifestations of the Supreme Consciousness that has made this creation possible. The Tantra says that the Supreme can be realised at these various points. According to one's ability and aptitude, one realises the great Goddess, becomes identified with her in her might, in her striking force, in her paralysing power or in her beauty and bliss, in her concord and harmony. If one wants to bathe in a river, one cannot bathe in the whole river; one has to bathe at a spot. Similarly if an aspirant wants to reach the Divine, circumscribed as he is by his receptivity and capacity, he chooses one particular path, takes up for adoration one aspect of the Divine. As his pursuit is exclusive, his progress is quick and his approach becomes direct. Ultimately he attains a perfect identification with the Divine.

But it is not the intention of the Tantra to limit the capacity of the individual to a particular realisation however perfect it may be. It is true that there are ten Maha Vidyas directly leading to the Supreme Truth, ten chalked out paths, safe and sure to have an immediate and direct approach. For instance if one takes to the Sadhana of the Maha Vidya, Chinnamasta, ultimately one attains a perfect identification with the Supreme. All the same it is a partial identification, for Chinnamasta is one facet of the many-faceted Supreme. Not a particular realisation, but a global realisation is required to attain the Total Divine. Pursuing our analogy of bathing in a river, if one wants to have a conception of the ebb and flow, the eddies and currents of a river one has to bathe at various spots in the river. This is exactly what one does when one takes a holy bath in a sacred place. For instance, in Kashi, baths in so many bathing ghats are prescribed in order that the bather may have a full realisation of the grandeur of the Divine Ganges. Similarly in these ten great disciplines of knowledge, the seeker can aspire for an integral knowledge and he may, depending on his capacity, come nearer the Total Divine, by having as many realisations as he can.

In fact, the Tantra which is justly famous as a science of synthesis holds that one Maha Vidya leads its Sadhaka to another depending on the need and aspiration of the Sadhaka. The worshipper of Kali has a unique realisation of the Divine, the Terrible. At the same time, the realisation of the Divine, the Auspicious is available to him if he understands the concept of *bhadra kāli.* Then he goes on to appreciate the correspondence between the other two Vidyas, Tripurasundari and Tripurabhairavi, Tripura the beautiful and Tripura the terrific. In the Sundari Vidya itself worship is prescribed for Mantrini and Dandanatha, the attendants of Lalita Tripurasundari. Mantrini is Syamala or Matangi and Dandanatha corresponds to Bagalamukhi. Thus the Vidya of Tripurasundari brings to the aspirant the realisations pertaining to the Vidyas of Matangi and Bagalamukhi.

Here a word of caution is necessary. When it is said that the Vidyas of Matangi and Bagalamukhi are implied in the Vidya of Sundari, the human mind immediately jumps to the conclusion that the Vidya of Sundari is superior to the other two Vidyas. The mind of man subject to the limitations of time and space can understand anything only in relation to time and space. Any new knowledge is immediately related to the old, classified and docketed as anterior or posterior, higher or lower. We reiterate that each of the ten Vidyas leads the seeker to the Supreme Reality. Each is great in its own right and each is equal in all respects to each of the other nine Vidyas. The practices of certain disciplines are widely prevalent, others are less known. For that matter they are not less important.

Again, an integral realisation is possible in these Vidyas because though they are distinct and unique, they have among themselves many characteristics in common. Kali, Chinnamasta, Dhumavati and Bagalamukhi have the common characteristics of Power and Force, active or dormant. Sundari, Bhuvaneshwari, Bhairavi, Matangi and Kamalatmika share the qualities of Light, Delight and Beauty. Tara has certain characteristics of Kali and certain others of Sundari and is correlated to Bhairavi, Bagalamukhi and Matangi in the aspect of Sound-Force expressed or impeded. Thus the ten Maha Vidyas fall into three broad divisions of discipline. The Veda lauds three Goddesses, producers of delight, *tisro devīr mayobhuvaḥ*. The Upanishads mention the One unborn, red, white and dark *ajām ekām lohita śukla kṛṣṇām*. The Tantras speak of Kali, the dark, Tara the white and Sundari the red.

In this ancient land, for ages the worship of these great mighty Personalities of the Mother has been prevalent. The other Vidyas have been practised but they have not come into the lime light. In the southern part of India the Vidya of Sundari, Sri Vidya, has been much in vogue. In the far north and north-west, in Tibet and in Kashmir adoration of Tara is popular. In the north-east parts of the country, especially in Bengal, the cult of Kali is famous. Thus the whole of India is full of adoration for the Divine Mother and the spirit of India has been eternally sustained by the Force Supreme, *parā śakti.* The might of Kali, the wisdom of Tara and the beauty of Sundari have forged and fashioned this ancient race where the first man, the offspring of *manu*, the thinker, dared to peer with his earthly eyes into the portals of the Beyond.

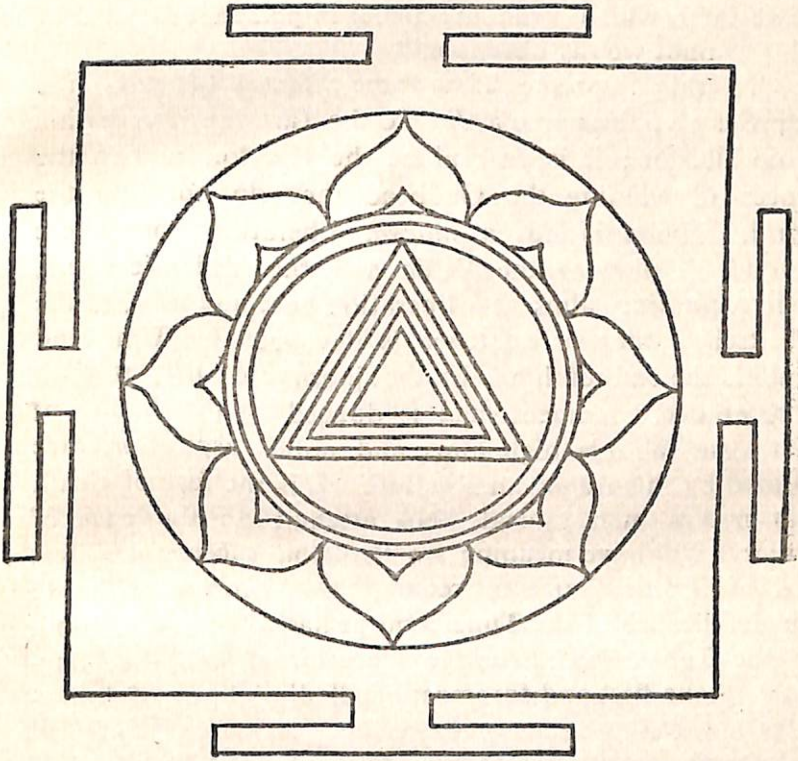
We shall now take up for study the respective Vidyas.

KALI

The Supreme Consciousness is the One Reality Eternal. At first it becomes conscious of itself, holds all in itself, in essence without reference to time. The creation starts with the extension of this Timeless Spirit to bring out what is all along implied in it. This self-extension of the Supreme, this objectivisation from the subjective initial state, measured by movement and event, we call Time, *kāla*. This Time assumes a triple status *tredhā nidadhe padam* for creation and the created beings have the relative experience of Time as past, present and future. The experience is relative because past is what was present once, present is what was future before and future is what will become present and then past after a time. Thus there is a continuous movement, a Time-sequence which is an infinite continuum of apparently definite parts. And these parts, definite demarcations in the progression of successive development are the characteristics of Time. To this characteristic, we give the name Death. That is why, in the Sanskrit language Death also is denoted by the name *kāla*. The Lord of Death is known as *yama*, the restrainer, as he restrains the continuous movement in Time, as *antaka* or *kṛtānta* one who makes the termination, as *dharma* the law of this mutable creation.

In the words of Sri Aurobindo: "There is the one fundamental necessity of the nature and object of embodied life itself, which is to seek infinite experience on a finite basis; and since the form, the basis by its very organisation limits the possibility of experience, this can only be done by dissolving it and seeking new forms. For the soul, having once limited itself by concentrating on the moment and the field, is driven to seek its infinity again by the principle of succession, by adding moment to moment and thus storing up a Time-experience which it calls its past; in that Time it moves through successive fields, successive experiences or lives, successive accumulations of knowledge, capacity, enjoyment, and all this it holds in subconscious or superconscious memory as its fund of past acquisition in Time. To this process, change of form is essential, and for the soul involved in individual body change of form means dissolution of the body in subjection to the law and compulsion of the All-life in the material universe, to its law of supply of the material of form and demand on the material, its principle of constant intershock and the struggle of the embodied life to exist in a world of mutual devouring. And this is the law of Death.

"This then is the necessity and justification of Death, not as a denial of Life, but as a process of Life; death is necessary because eternal change of form is the sole immortality to which the finite living substance can aspire and eternal change of experience the sole infinity to which the finite mind involved in living body can attain. This change of form cannot be allowed to remain merely a constant renewal of the same form-type such as constitutes our bodily life between birth and death; for unless the form-type is changed and the experiencing mind is thrown into new forms in new circumstances of time, place and environment, the necessary variation of experience which the very nature of existence in Time and Space demands, cannot be effectuated. And it is only the process of Death, by dissolution and by the devouring of life by life, it is only the absence of freedom, the compulsion, the struggle, the pain, the subjection to something



KALI

that appears to be Not-Self which makes this necessary and salutary change appear terrible and undesirable to our mortal mentality. It is the sense of being devoured, broken up, destroyed or forced away which is the sting of Death and which even the belief in personal survival of death cannot wholly abrogate."[1]

To this Supreme Time-force, Shakti of Kala, the Tantrics give the name *kāli.* To the Tantrics this creation is no illusion; it is as real as the Creator, and in the process of winning the Godhead they do not lose the world. Theirs is not a *mokṣa,* liberation somewhere beyond. Following the Vedic and the Vedantic seers, their aspiration aims at a liberation here and now, in the life itself. But the existence is devoured by Time and death is the end of life. In the journey of life, at each step, at every moment man is dogged by the shadow of death and all his high aims and noble aspirations are vitiated by this tragic culmination. It is the fear of death that makes man mortal. No attempt on the path of progress will have meaning, no Sadhana successful unless and until this fear is overcome. Death has to be faced; the significance of the Time-concept has to be understood. So the Tantra lays down the adoration of Kali, the Time-force, as the first and foremost of all disciplines of knowledge.

Death prowls as a hungry beast devouring the whole creation, sparing none. So the Tantric sees the world as a great cemetry, *mahā śmaśāna.* In this *mahā śmaśāna,* the Divine Mother Kali dances. Her dance indicates the intense activity, the myriad moments of the Time-sequence following in quick succession. She is Death the devourer, the ruthless killer. Mounted on a dead body, terrible is she with ferocious fangs; and a derisive laughter marks her face. Stark naked, the Dark One with her lolling tongue has for her garland a string of skulls. She has four hands; in two of them she has the sword and the severed head, and the other two, the auspicious Mother keeps for giving boons and allaying fear. Thus the Tantric contemplates on the dark Mother.[1] To him two of her personalities stand out in contemplation. They are *dakṣiṇa kālī* and *bhadra kālī*.

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[1] The Life Divine: Chapter XX.

Both *dakṣiṇa* and *bhadra* are Vedic words. A divine discernment, a right action born out of an intuitional discrimination, an adroitness in execution—these are denoted by the term Dakshina. It is true that Kali is the might of the Supreme, the stupendous strength of all the Gods and she carries in her wake death and devastation. She sweeps the whole existence with her terrible tide of destruction, no doubt. But she does this with a divine discernment. Her act of destruction is a right action as it is done with a purpose. It is not a clumsy execution but a skilful performance, preparing the ground. So she is acclaimed as Dakshina Kali. But what is the purpose of this destruction? What ground does the dark death prepare? It is the right creation, all auspiciousness and felicity belonging to the state of truth denoted by the word Bhadram that is brought about by the death and destruction. So she is Bhadra Kal, ithe auspicious Kali who destroys in order to create. She cooks everything in the cauldron of the cosmos *pācaka śakti,* she is the eternal energy of evolution, Time the transformer. For successive deaths are only milestones in the highway of life. They are the thousand gates that open out to Eternity. The terrible mother lashes the mortal man with the scourge of death towards immortality. Her darkness is the preparatory time of the night before the dawn.

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[1] शवारूढां महाभीमां घोरदंष्ट्रां हसन्मुखीम् ।
चतुर्भुजां खड्गमुण्डवराभयकरां शिवाम् ॥
मुण्डमालाधरां देवीं ललज्जिह्वां दिगम्बराम् ।
एवं सञ्चिन्तयेत् कालीं श्मशानालयवासिनीम् ॥

She represents the evolutionary principle and her cosmic actions work out the gradual unfoldment of the divine possibilities. In terrestial existence, natural calamities like earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, cyclones, flood, pestilence etc., are her actions designed for a quick upheaval. So also are wars, revolutions, riots etc., designed by her to hasten human progress. In the being of the individual she is the power of transformation; the dormant dynamism, the potential energy of evolution. She is the black serpent lying coiled and asleep in the inner body, Kundalini Shakti. Under proper conditions this force uncoils itself, stands up straight like a serpent, spreading its hood and lifts itself more and more till it meets the divine consciousness above. When this takes place, the closed planes and parts of being in man open, there is a gradual unfoldment or a speedy transformation towards the Yogic consciousness. Whether one consciously makes an effort to raise the Kundalini or not, in all paths of Yoga, at one time or other, the effects of Kundalini's play are experienced in the inner body. Thus the grace of Kali is indispensable for any kind of transformation or progress which is the avowed object of any yoga.

Now let us deal with the worship of this dark Mother. It is said that this self cannot be acquired by one devoid of strength, *nāyam ātmā balahīnena labhyaḥ.* The valiant ones know his source *tasya dhīrāh parijānanti yonim,* proclaims the Veda. Kali the terrible is the Mother of might and is the deity of the mighty ones strong in mind and body. The weak and the wicked are awestruck by her powerful personality. None can face her frontal assault. But she is liked by the brave, by the hero-warrior *vīra.* The path of the Vira, Virachara, is eminently suited for getting the favour of the Goddess. In occult Sadhana, the characteristics of the deity are simulated. The hero-warrior Vira repairs to a cemetry, takes his seat on a corpse, fronts all those that are normally feared and attains Siddhi. All those who are impatient with the tardy progress of life invoke Kali : " for they feel that her blows beat what is rebellious in their material into strength and perfect truth, hammer straight what is wry and perverse and expel what is impure or defective. But for her what is done in a day might have taken centuries."[1]

The Mantra of Kali is the seed-sound *bījākṣara krīm.* She is Kundalini in the body expressing herself as activity through the Pranic force. The body and the spirit are brought together by the life-force, the vital, the outward symbol of which is the flowing breath, in and out of the body, all the time. The vital or the Pranic force in the individual is a replica of the Pranic force in the cosmos, the Time-movement, which is Kali. Through the vital, the Pranic force, the being is transformed and the earthly life made spiritual. As the vital is the seat of emotions, all swift, straight and frank impulses, all intense feelings are the movements of Kali. A spiritual Sadhana is prescribed to win the grace of Kali. The method is to unite one's consciousness constantly with the inflowing and outflowing breath.[1] There is a big difference between breathing involuntarily all the time and breathing knowingly even for sometime. By uniting one's consciousness at each step with inhalation and exhalation, one becomes conscious of the Pranic force that sustains one's being and then the great cosmic Pranic force that is Kali. Adoring the Time-force thus, one understands that

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[1] Sri Aurobindo : The Mother.

> "All here is a mystery of contraries;
> Darkness a magic of self-hidden light,
> Suffering some secret rapture's tragic mask
> And death an instrument of perpetual life."[2]

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[1] प्राणसमीरं विदधानमिमं नित्यां यात्रामत्र शरीरे ।
चरणे चरणे परिशीलयति स्थिरदृष्टिर्यस्तमवति काली ॥
—Vasishtha Ganapati Muni in *umāsahasram* X. 2.

[2] Sri Aurobindo: Savitri X. 1

TARA

The second of the Maha Vidyas is Tara. From a comparative study of Tantric books on Tara and the Buddhistic and Jaina literature, some scholars have advanced the theory that Goddess Tara is a late and subsequent addition to the Tantric pantheon and her worship has become prevalent in this land only after the advent of Buddhism and Jainism.

In the Buddhistic lore, Tara figures as the counterpart or Shakti of *avalokiteśwara,* the Lord who has directed his glance downwards, in compassion. In the Mahayana school, she is represented as the mother of the Buddhas as well as Bodhisattvas. At times she is depicted as a Bodhisattva, not inferior to any other, rather superior who could be approached directly without the intervention of any other power. A goddess Tara figures in the Jaina pantheon as well. Hemachandra in his *abhidhāna cintāmaṇi* mentions *sutārakā* or *sutārā* as the *śāsana devatā* of the ninth Jina, Suvidhinatha. *bhrukuṭī,* a form of Tara in the Buddhistic school has been opted by the Swetambara Jinas as the *śāsana devatā* of the eighth Jina, Chandraprabha.

The Tantric books speak of Tara as Ugra Tara ; the fierce Tara, having Akshobhya posited on her head. The seer of the Mantra of Tara also is Rishi Akshobhya. The Tantras call her *prajñā pāramitā,* one who has attained the shore of consciousness. They prescribe *mahā cīnācāra* as the method for propitiating her. Now Akshobhya is a very familiar name both in Mahayana and Hinayana Buddhism. It is the name of the Buddha who stood unagitated, *akṣobhya* against the onslaughts of Mara. Also, *prajñā pāramitā* is decidedly a Bhuddhistic appellation. And Mahachina is Tibet. Ugra Tara, the fierce, can be easily made out as Bhrukuti, the Goddess with eyebrows knit in anger. All these go to show that Tara is of Buddhistic origin, aver some scholars. They also quote some Tantras to say that Tara belongs to *uttarāmnāya*, the tradition of the North and there is a legend according to which Vasishtha went to Mahachina to learn the mode of worshipping Tara from Buddha himself.

From the inscription of the reign of the Chalukya king Tribhuvanamalla Vikramaditya VI belonging to the Saka year 1017 (A.D. 1096) on a stone tablet bearing the figure of Tara[1] one understands that Tara was invoked to allay all kinds of fears arising from lions, elephants, fire, serpents, robbers, submerging waters, ocean and ghosts.[2] She was the one who quickly granted the desired ends and was called to guard at the cross-roads.[3] One of the images of Tara excavated at Nalanda had on the back engraved the Mantra, *om tārė tuttārė turė swāhā : tura* or *twara,* has, always been the quality of Tara and she has been quick in granting favours. Also Tara has been mentioned in connection with the crossing of waters and navigation. The famous *laghustava* indicates that one should remember Tara in the upsurge of waters, *tārām ca toyaplavė*. The Lalitopakhyana mentions that on the way

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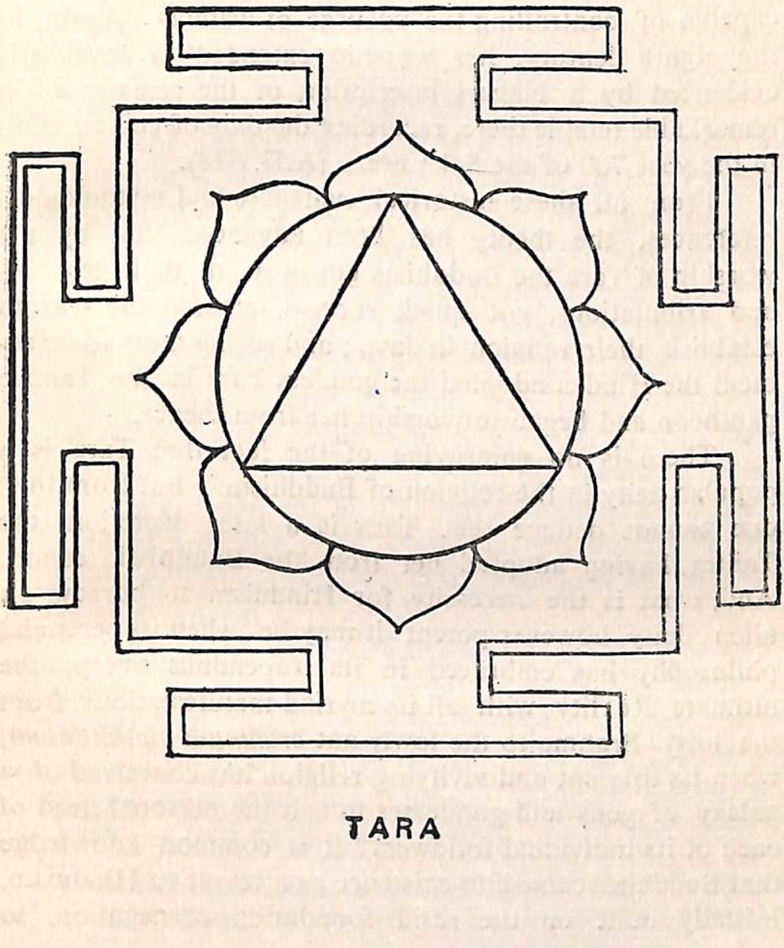
[1] Fleet: Indian Antiquity Antiquary-Vol. X, pp. 185 ff.

[2] हरिकरिशिखिफणितस्करनिगल जलार्णवपिशाचभयशमनि
शशिकिरणकान्तिधारिणि भगवति तारे नमस्तुभ्यम् ॥

[3] तारा तूर्णवितीर्णवाञ्छितफला पायात् सदा सङ्गमम् ।



TARA

to the mansion of the Goddess Lalita there is a lake of nectar which has to be crossed by boat. There, presiding over innumerable Shaktis plying the boats, Tara shines capable of controlling the upsurge of waters.[1] Again, in the eighth century, her worship extended to Java as is evidenced by a Nagari inscription of the remains of a remarkable temple there, recording the date of construction in the year 700 of the Saka era. (A.D. 778).

From all these historical evidences and mythological references, the theory has been advanced that by the worship of Tara the Buddhists got over all their troubles and tribulations, got quick success, crossed the seas to establish their religion in Java ; and seeing their advancement the Hindus adopted the goddess Tara in the Tantric pantheon and began to worship her from thence.

There is no gainsaying of the fact that Tara is a popular deity in the religion of Buddhism. But from this, one cannot deduce that Tara is a later accretion, the Tantra having adopted her from the Buddhistic canon. And, what is the necessity for Hinduism to borrow an alien deity however potent it may be, when its perennial philosophy has embraced in its stupendous sweep, the ultimate Reality with all its myriad manifestations, from the lofty Brahma to the lowly ant *brahmādi pipīlikāntam*, when its tolerant and vivifying religion has conceived of a galaxy of gods and goddesses to suit the personal need of each of its individual followers ? It is common knowledge that Buddhism came into existence as a revolt to Hinduism. Initially built on the solid foundation of negation, to survive as an edifice, it had later on to add to its structure certain characteristics of the Hindu religion. This is how gods and goddesses and Bodhisatvtas began to be worshipped in a religion preaching absolute negation and having the set goal of *nirvāṇa,* the extinction of existence as its paramount realisation.

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[1] तासां नौकावाहिकानां शक्तीनां श्यामलत्विषाम् ।
प्रधानभूता ताराम्बा जलौघशमनक्षमा ॥ —Ch. 31. sl. 17

The worship of Tara is at least as old as the Vedas. Much is made out of the statement in the Tantras that Tara is a deity of the *uttarāmnāya,* the traditions of the North. The worship of the Goddess was almost non-existent till recently,[1] in the south of Vindhyas. It has been prevalent in Kashmir, Mithila and Tibet, the popular land of Buddhism. But be it noted that Tibet existed as a stretch of land long before the advent of Buddhism and Buddhism did not restrict itself to the north alone. Also the extent to which the worship of a deity is prevalent does not in any way determine the nativity or antiquity of the deity. For that matter, the worship of many deities of the Dasa Mahavidyas is not popular or publicly known.

Again, if we go by legend and tradition, we have to consider the following account in the *todala tantra*. The gods on the one side and the Asuras on the other churned the milky ocean in the hope of getting the immortal nectar. When poison, *hālāhala,* emerged instead of the nectar, all of them were agitated except the great Lord

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[1] In *ramana gita,* a compilation of Sanskrit verses of the essential teachings of Sri Ramana Maharshi, the Sage of Arunachala, it is mentioned that the wife of Sri Vasishtha Ganapati Muni was the first person to propagate the Vidya of Tara in the south of Vindhyas, having obtained it from a female Guru of Mithila.

दक्षिणे विन्ध्यतः शक्तेस्तारिण्या आदिमा गुरुः ।

—Ch. 13

Shiva who did not lose his presence of mind. He was] the one that was unagitated, *akṣobhya*, and at the instance of his Shakti, he swallowed the poison to save the world. His Shakti is Tara, the Saviour, the one who carried them all to the path of safety.

The Sanskrit word Tara comes from the root *tṛ*, to traverse. It is used to denote one who crosses, *tarati*, and makes others cross as well, *tārayati*. Tara or Taraka is the word in Sanskrit to denote a star as it traverses in space and acts as guiding light. It is also an appellation for the guiding light in the human eye, the pupil, because of which the eye is justly called *nayana* or *netra*, that which leads. A boat is called *tarī*, as it makes one cross the waters. The image of the ocean and the crossing of waters is largely employed in the ancient litanies of the Vedic seers. The Veda speaks of two oceans, superconscient, and inconscient, one high above and the other down below. We can quote many Riks to show that the art of shipbuilding or navigation was not unknown to them. For instance, in the famous Rik, *jātavedasé*[1] addressed to Agni and later ascribed to the Goddess Durga in the Tantra, the Vedic Seer affirms that Agni carries him across all tribulations like a ship across the ocean *nāveva sindhum*. And the Divine Mother, Aditi, is accosted as the Divine Ship and the Seer prays: " May we ascend Aditi for Beatitude, the Divine ship endowed with quick propellers, faultless, intact without slits, a capable protector, spacious as earth like heaven to which no hurt can come, a happy shelter and skilful carrier."[1]

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[1] जातवेदसे सुनवाम सोममरातीयतो निदहाति वेदः ।
स नः पर्षदति दुर्गाणि विश्वा नावेव सिन्धुं दुरितात्यग्निः ॥
—Rig Veda I. 99. 1.

Again, if we study the spiritual tradition that has come down to us through the ages, we find that Goddess Tara has been invoked in connection with the acquisition of knowledge, with the attainment of a potent power of speech, with the dramatic display of feats of learning. It is a fact that scholars hailing from Kashmir and Mithila, the places where the worship of Tara is very prevalent, have made no mean contribution to the enrichment of Sanskrit language and literature.

There is thus a seeming contradiction. On the one hand, Tara is connected with saving people from disasters, ferrying them across the waters of troubles and tribulations. On the other, she is connected with speech, with the acquisition of knowledge and her name *nīla saraswati* seems to stress this aspect of hers. What then is the real character and function of this Deity, acclaimed as the second of the Mahavidyas?

When the Transcendent Absolute desires to manifest out of its own volition, there is a movement, a stir, a throb. This primordial throb *ādya spanda* starts a series of vibrations which take the form of sound, *nāda*, which is the precursor of the creation of objects—*artha sṛṣṭeh purvam śabda sṛṣṭih.* This, the Veda calls as the *nityā vāk*. Eternal Word, the *akṣara,* represented by the sound-symbal 'Om'. "For, it is the nearest representative approach in the mental and vocal expression to the inexpressible fountain-source of all original rhythms of the Supreme Ether."[1] In the words of Sri Aurobindo, "The foundation of all the potent creative sounds of the revealed word, Om is the universal formulation of the energy of sound and speech, that which contains and sums up, synthetises and releases, all the spiritual power and all the potentiality of *vāk* and *śabda* and of which the other sounds, out of whose stuff words of speech are woven, are supposed to be the developed evolutions...........All word and thought are an out-flowering of the great Om,—Om, the Word, the Eternal, manifest in the form of sensible objects, manifest in that conscious play of creative self-conception of which forms and objects are the figures, manifest behind in the self-gathered superconscient power of the Infinite, Om is the sovereign source, seed, womb of thing and idea, form and name—it is itself, integrally, the Supreme Intangible, the original Unity, the timeless Mystery self-existent above all manifestation in supernal being." Undoubtedly, it is this *praṇava*, Om that is known by the famous appellation, *tāra* or *tāraka*. The force whose sound-symbol is Om is the great goddess Tara. That which the Vedic seers call as Akshara, the Upanishadic sages as Pranava and the Puranic bards as the immaculate white Gouri, that force is the Tara of the Tantrics.[2] Thus, the Maha Vidya Tara is the primordial *nāda*, the *paśyantī vāk*, the seeing Word perceiving the coming creation, the sound-substance of all sounds, the highly praised Pranava, the *anujñākṣara*, the word of sanction, the affirmative to the creative Godhead, the source of all speech and the repository of all knowledge.

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[1] M. P. Pandit: Aditi and other Deities in the Veda:

सुत्रामाणं पृथिवीं द्यामनेहसं सुशर्माणमदितिं सुप्रणीतिम् ।
दैंवीं नावं स्वरित्रामनागसमस्रवन्तीमा रुहेमा स्वस्तये ॥

—(Shukla Yajur Veda, 21. 6)

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[1] Sri Kapali Sastriar: Lights on the Ancients.

[2] यदक्षरं वेदविदामृषीणां वेदान्तिनां यः प्रणवो मुनीनाम् ।
गौरी पुराणेषु विपश्चितां या सा तान्त्रिकाणां वचनेन तारा ।।
—Vasishtha Ganapati Muni in *indrāṇi saptaśati* 21. (11).

And there is no contradiction in the concept of Tara being a saviour ferrying the aspirant across troubles and tribulations. For ignorance is the greatest of all troubles that man is heir to, the direst of all disasters that can befall him. Tara gives the guiding Word, the Word that guides creation on its chartered path, grants the ultimate knowledge which roots out all ignorance and ferries the aspirant from non-being to being, from darkness to light, from death to immortality.

The Tantra mentions three of her great Personalities: Ugra Tara, Nila Saraswati and Ekajata. Ugra Tara, as her name indicates, is fierce and like Kali is mounted on a corpse. Hers is the vehement vibration that disturbs the primordial immobility, hers is the sound-force shattering the stubborn stillness, The Tantra says that she gathers all the ignorance of the triple worlds in her bowl made of the human cranium and then destroys it in a sweep[1]. Nilasaraswati is the power of the word piercing the tenebrous space, the light of knowledge that pierces through the darkness of ignorance. Ekajata is the goddess with a single matted hair signifying that all the scattered vibrations of sound are being channelised in the act of creation. She is not *muktakeśī*, her hair falling loose, her energies scattered, but Ekajata her forces moblised in the purposive act of creation. Tara is also classified as *śuklā*, *neelā* and *citrā*. *śukla*, white, is her immaculate form, pure and unsullied, the original Word in its pristine glory. *neelā*, blue or dark, is her form when she descends into the dark womb of creation from the height of her white radiance. *citrā*, the multicoloured, is the manifestation of Tara as the many forms in the work-a-day world.

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[1] जाडयं न्यस्य कपालके त्रिजगतां हन्त्युग्रतारा स्वयम् ।

Now, coming to the Mantra of the Goddess, the one seed-sound which represents her integrally is the *akṣara, om*. It is the sound-symbol used before every other Mantra. To quote Sri Aurobindo, "the mantra Om should lead towards the opening of th econsciousness to the sight and feeling of the One consciousness in all material things, in the inner being and in the supraphysical worlds, in the casual plane above now superconscient to us and finally, the supreme liberated transcendence above all cosmic existence". Apart from this, Ugra Tara is worshipped by the Mantra, *om hrīm strīm, hūm phat,* Ekajata by the Mantra, *hrīm strīm hūm phat* and Nilasaraswati by the three seed-sounds *hrīm strīm hūm*. The tradition is that the Mantra is propagated by female Gurus. When a child is born, even before three days are passed, the mother of the child or some other woman writes with a small shoot of *vaca* dipped in honey or ghee on the tongue of the new-born child the three letters of the Mantra of Neela Saraswati.[1] Thus purified from the very birth by the Mantra, the tongue becomes a sure vehicle of superb speech, articulating in word without any distortion, the noblest thoughts and the highest inspirations. It is said that only on account of this practice prevalent there, in olden days, scholars of great distinction emerged in abundance from Kashmir.

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[1] जातमात्रस्य बालस्य दिवसत्रितयादधः ।
जिह्वायां विलिखेन्मन्त्रं मध्वाज्याभ्यां शलाकया ॥

A special kind of worship is prescribed in the case of Tara, which is known as *mahācīnācāra*. This was originally practised in *mahācina,* Tibet and has been much misunderstood. When the Tantric lays stress on bath, cleanliness etc., the votaries of the Achara ask the question: What is this bath, and for whom is this bath? *kim snānam kasya vā snānam.* From this it has been hastily concluded in some quarters that this Achara is the practice of the dirty infidels who have no belief in the customs and manners of the Hindu worshipper. On the other hand, this is a highly philosophical system. The aim of worship is to become the deity and worship the deity, *śivo bhutvā śivam yajet.* In that case, where is the question of purity or bath etc.? Again, certain periods of the day or night like the Sandhyas are prescribed as auspicious for worship. But in this world created by God, everything is auspicious. There is nothing like an inauspicious moment.[1] Auspicious is the moment when the thought of God arises. And the thought of God should always be there. Tara is *nityā vāk,* the eternal Word, reverberating without any intermission as the underlying sound-substance Om in all beings, the never-ending *nāda* in the hearts of all, the *ajapa*, that which goes on endlessly repeating itself without any effort of articulation. So in the worship of such a deity, there is no regulation regarding time and place, no restriction regarding posture etc. There is no prescribed period for japa, prayer or consecration. Eternal is Tara and constant should be her worship. No man-made prescription or regulation should be allowed to fetter the free flow of this constant rhythm, this eternal symphony.[1] This is the doctrine of *mahācinācāra.*

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[1] सर्व एव शुभः कालो नाशुभो वर्तते क्वचित् ।
न विशेषो दिवा रात्रौ न सन्ध्यायां महानिशि ॥

In the Sadhana of this Mahavidya, the aspirant should be an absolute servitor of Truth. Especially in speech he should never allow falsehood, in whatever form to enter. Falsehood drives away the Goddess. For this purpose, certain spiritual disciplines prescribe absolute silence. But this is avoiding the problem. Moderation in speech is much more difficult than keeping silent and this should be practised. Recital of the Vedas, sticking at all costs to Truth in speech, talking only what is helpful and necessary—these practices speedily make the aspirant a vehicle for *śuklā's* manifestation. To realise *citrā,* the aspirant should treat praise and blame equally, enjoy the underlying sound-sense equally in rhythmic poetry and in pandemonious noise. He should appreciate the harmony as well as the discordant note and perceive the *rasa* in the songs and cries of people. He should not be attached to sound, neither should he be indifferent to it. Such a one gets the favour of *citrā,* the multicoloured personality of the goddess Tara in the myriad manifestations of the universe.

There is no goddess like Tara in granting favours, *nahi tārāsamā kācit devatā siddhidāyinī* proclaims the Tantra. She is the Saviour who assures thus:

" I guide man to the path of the Divine
And guard him from the red Wolf and the Snake.

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[1] दिक्कालनियमो नास्ति स्थित्यादिनियमो न च ।
न जपे कालनियमो नार्चादिषु बलिष्वपि ।
स्वेच्छानियम उक्तोऽत्र महामन्त्रस्य साधने ॥

I set in his mortal hand my heavenly sword
And put on him the breast-plate of the Gods.
I break the ignorant pride of human mind
And lead the thought to the wideness of the Truth;
I rend man's narrow and successful life
And force his sorrowful eyes to gaze at the sun
That he may die to earth and live in his soul.
I know the goal, I know the secret route,
I have studied the map of the invisible worlds
I am the battle's head, the journey's star."[1]

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[1] Sri Aurobindo: Savitri VII. 4,

TRIPURASUNDARI

The Tantra conceives the Supreme in its dual poise of *prakāśa* and *vimarśa*. The Supreme as the Transcendent Absolute is the essential effulgence, *prakāśa*. When it is self-moved to manifest something of it, there is a deliberation, *vimarśa*, on itself. This deliberation takes the form of an impulsion, an urge, a desire, *kāma*. Desire comes about by a division in the being and it is a portion or a digit, *kalā*. This digit of desire of the Supreme, *kāmakalā*, is the great Goddess Tripurasundari, the third of the Dasa Maha Vidyas.

"That moved at first as desire within, which was the primal seed of mind" says the Rig Veda.[1] "He desired, I would be manifold for the birth of peoples" is the utterance of the Upanishad.[2] Desire is the secret of creation. Desire is the root of manifestation. Desire is the mainstay of existence. The Divine's desire to extend Himself, in manifestation is transmitted down the line in the individual being trying to perpetuate himself, aggrandize himself by a process of possession, absorption, assimilation and enjoyment. The desire first takes the form of fragmentation and then a seeking to unite all the fragmented parts in the whole. The Divine desires to

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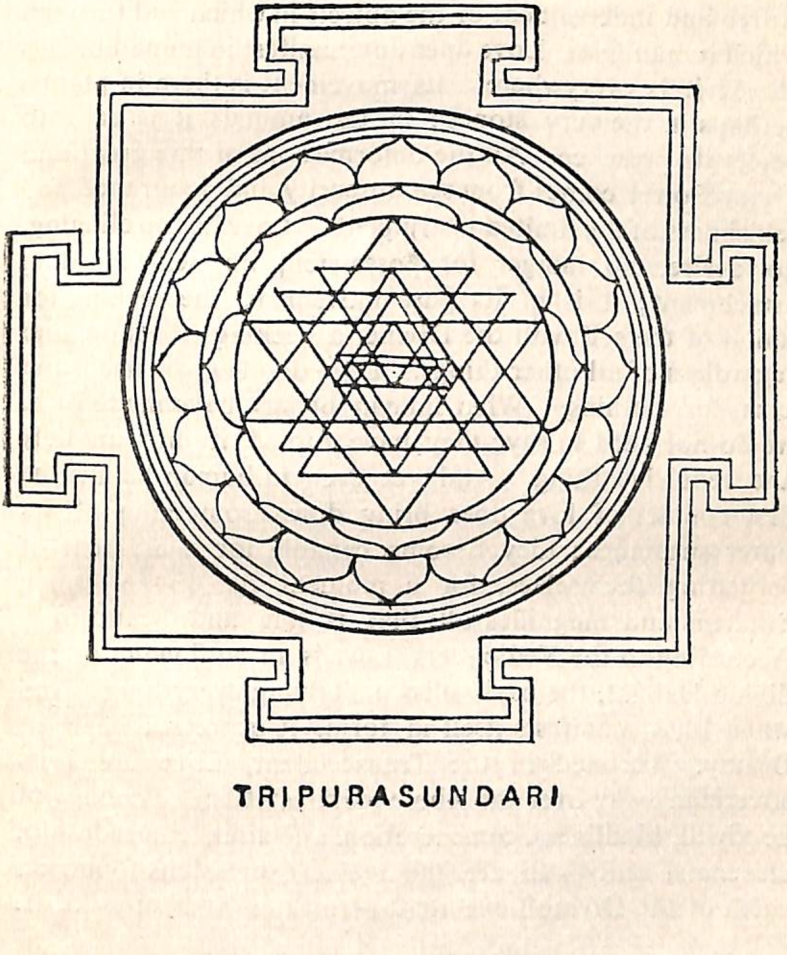
[1] (Sri Aurobindo's Translation)

कामस्तदग्रे समवर्तताधि मनसो रेतः प्रथमं यदासीत्

—R. V. X. 129

[2] सोऽकामयत । बहु स्यां प्रजायेयेति ।

—Taittiriya Upanishad.



TRIPURASUNDARI

give himself away in creation and then desires to receive back the creation into Himself. This twofold desire is the basis of Love, the vivifying bond that ties the creator and the created. For love "exists by itself and its movement is free and independent of the objects in which and through which it manifests. Love does not manifest in human beings alone; it is everywhere. Its movement is there in plants, perhaps in the very stones; in the animals it is easy to detect its presence. All the deformations of this great and divine Power comes from the obscurity and ignorance and selfishness of the limited instrument. Love has no clinging, no desire, no hunger for possession, no self-regarding attachment; it is in its pure movement, the seeking for union of the self with the Divine, a seeking absolute and regardless of all other things. Love divine gives itself and asks for nothing. What human beings have made of it, we do not need to say; they have turned it into an ugly and repulsive thing. And yet even in human beings the first contact of love does bring down something of its purer substance; they become capable for a moment of forgetting themselves, for a moment its divine touch awakens and magnifies all that is fine and beautiful."[1] According to the Vedic seers, Love is an outflowing of the divine Delight, the basic Bliss underlying everything. And when Bliss manifests itself in form, it expresses itself as Beauty. Throned in the Transcendent, Love holds its sovereign sway over the whole manifestation. Feelings of goodwill, kindliness, consideration, affection, comradeship, closeness, unity—all are the feeble expressions found on earth of the Divine Love that permeates and sustains it.

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[1] Path to Perfection (a compilation of writings of the Mother): Keshavamurti.

So the force of the first fragmentation, the Digit of the Divine Desire is the great Goddess *kāmakalą*. She is the eternal empress of all sovereignties, *rājarājeśwarī*, her most imperial Majesty, *parā bhattārikā*. She is the Mother of Love, *kāmeśwarī*, the Mother of Grace, *lalitā*, the Mother of Beauty, *sundarī*.

She is known as *tripurasundari*, the Beauty *par excellence* in the triad. *pura* stands for city, place or field of action and *tripura* denotes the threefold field. The Vedic seers conceived of the cosmos as a gradation of worlds, the higher triple consisting of the *vyāhṛtis, janaḥ, tapaḥ, satyam,* the lower triple constituted by the *vyāhṛtis, bhuḥ, bhuvaḥ, suvaḥ,* connected by the link world of *mahas.* The Upanishadic savants spoke of the threefold Brahman, Sat-Chit-Ananda, Truth-Consciousness-Bliss projecting himself into the triple world of *annam, prāṇa and manas,* physical, vital and mental, through the intermediary Gnosis, *vijñāna.* The Tantric adepts explain the creation as the outcome of the impulse of prime Desire which results in a throb, *spanda,* a vibration, *nāda,* concentrating itself in a point *bindu* and then becoming three *bindus* forming a triangle that is the source, *yoni,* of all manifestation. The great Goddess, the supreme Mother manifesting herself in the threefold aspect is known as Tripura or Tripurasundari. She is immanent in every triad, the three worlds, the three states of *jāgrat,* waking, *swapna,* dream and *suṣupti,* deep sleep, the three forces of *icchā,* will, *jñāna,* knowledge and *kriyā,* action, the triads, *triputis*, *māna,* measure, *mātṛ,* the measurer and *meya*, the measurable, *jñāna,* knowledge, *jñatṛ,* the knower and *jñeya* the knowable and so on. She also transcends all the triads. She is a certain fourth, *turīyam svid,* presiding over and encompassing every triad. Thus she is famous as Tripurasundari, Sundari, immanent in and at the same time transcending every triad, Tripura.

Even as Tripura, the Goddess is said to be threefold *tripurā trividhā*. The three Personalities are *bālā, tripurasundarī* and *tripurabhairavi.* Bala is the little daughter of the Divine Mother Tripurasundari, sharing all her characteristics and easily accessible to the young aspirant on the path. Her grace automatically grants the grace of her mother. Tripurasundari is Tripura, the beautiful, while Tripurabhairavi is Tripura, the terrible. They are like two sides of a coin, the dual aspects of the great Goddess. Tripurabhairavi is worshipped in her own right as one of the Dasa Maha Vidyas.

Tripurasundari is also the supreme sovereign Rajarajeshwari, her most imperial Majesty Parabhattarika. All the myriads of gods and goddesses derive their authority and power from this great Queen *śri mahārājñī* and function in her name. Many are the Powers and Personalities of the great Goddess; but three stand out in the worship of the Divine Mother. They are *bālā*, the little daughter; *mantriṇī,* the Counsellor and *daṇḍanāthā*, the Commander of armed forces. Mantrini is the minister to Rajarajeshwari and noted for her sagacity and wisdom. She is the Matangi of the Dasa Maha Vidyas. Dandanatha represents the might of the Mother destroying all the anti-divine forces. She is known as Varahi, the great consumer and corresponds to Bagalamukhi of the Dasa Maha Vidyas.

The Tantric meditates on the Goddess as one who is effulgent like the rising sun, having four hands and three eyes. She is auspicious and wields in her four hands the noose, the goad, the sugarcane bow and five flower arrows.[1] Red is the colour of Desire, of passion, *rāga*, of *rajo guṇa* which evolved from the first activity. And so the Mother of Love, the Divine Desire, is conceived as red like the rising sun. Her three eyes denote the perceptions in the triad, *tripura*. Her noose is nothing but Love by which she binds the whole creation. As long as a being is bound to oneself or to others, it is *pāśa,* the noose. The moment a person binds himself to the Divine, he is liberated. Wrath, the negative aspect of Love is the goad by which the whole creation is spurred into activity. The sugarcane bow in the hand of the Mother is the mind of man and the five arrows are the five *tanmātrās,* sound, touch, form, relish and flavour.[2] The secret of the Sadhana is that the mind should become a docile instrument in the hands of the Divine; then the mind will not have a will of its own. The Divine Will will be its will.

The Mantra of the Deity is known as *śrī vidyā*. *Śrī* being a prefix used to denote auspiciousness, Sri Vidya means *the* knowledge, the knowledge that alone matters. It is the knowledge, by knowing which all other things are known, the Supreme knowledge that leads to liberation. A liberation not elsewhere, but here and now is the goal of the worshippers of Sri Vidya Mantra. The Tantra declares that by the mere knowledge of Sri Vidya, all accomplishments result, *śrīvidyā jñānamātreṇa sarva siddhiḥ prajāyate*. Why the Mantra known as Sri Vidya is held in such high esteem?

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[1] बालार्कमण्डलाभासां चतुर्बाहुं त्रिलोचनाम् ।
पाशाङ्कुशशरां श्चापं धारयन्तीं शिवां भजे ॥

[2] रागस्वरूपपाशाढ्या क्रोधाकाराङ्कुशोज्ज्वला ।
मनोरूपेक्षुकोदण्डा पञ्चतन्मात्रसायका ॥

—Lalita Sahasranama.

It is the realisation of the Tantric seers that the Mantra is the sound-body of the deity. It is the deity itself formulated in articulated sound. This sound-body has a remarkable correlation with the form of the deity that is contemplated in Dhyana. But nowhere the concordance is so close, the identification so complete as between Sundari and her Mantra. Corresponding to the triple aspect of Tripurasundari, there are three distinct parts, *khaṇḍas*, in the Mantra which are also called as peaks, *kūṭas*. The first *kūṭa* is her face, the second is the portion below her neck upto the hip and the third *kūṭa* is the portion of the body below the hip. Her body-frame is verily the three *kūṭas* of the Mulamantra, *mūlakūṭatraya kalevarā*. The first kuta is known as *vāgbhava*, the source of sound, the first vibration; the second kuta is famed as *kāmarājā*, the king of love, the first desire; the third is celebrated as *śakti*, the force, the first activity. These are denoted respectively by the seed-sounds *aim*, *klīm* and *sauḥ*, the precursors and parents of creation. Thus *aim, klīm, sauḥ* is the Sri Vidya Mantra, the special Mantra by which *bālā*, the young daughter of the Divine Mother is invoked. These three seed-sounds, *bījākṣaras*, are amplified, the first to five letters, the second to six letters and the third to four letters to form the fifteen-lettered *pañcadaśi* Mantra. With a secret seed-sound at the end, it becomes *ṣoḍaśī*, the famous sixteen-lettered Mantra. There are many variations in the Mantra, different schools of Sri Vidya. The Tantra records the names of Manu, Chandra, Kubera, Lopamudra, Manmatha, Agastya, Nandikesa, Surya, Vishnu, Skanda, Siva and Durvasa as the twelve foremost worshippers of Sri Vidya, each one of them founding a school of their own. Out of these, the Vidya of Manmatha, beginning with the letter *ka* (therefore known as *kādi*) and the Vidya of Agastya, beginning with the letter *ha* (and so known as *hādi*) are widely prevalent.

Just as Sri Vidya is the sound-body of the Goddess, Sri Chakra is her form-pattern. It is the basis, foundation and continent of all the other Chakras mentioned in the Tantra, is most auspicious and does the utmost good to the worshipper. It is reputed as the abode of the Goddess, the abode of all her myriad powers, personalities and emanations. The great Goddess abides in the *bindu* of the Sri Chakra, in the point from where the lines of creation emerge, in the jewelled mansion of the illumined thought-mind *cintāmaṇi gṛha,* amidst lotus groves and *kadamba* trees which signify the manifold creation, surrounded by the vast immortal consciousness, *sudhā sindhu.* The Goddess is seated on a cot, the legs of which are Brahma, Vishnu, Rudra and Isana and the plank of which is Sadasiva. She is the one who does the five acts, *pañcakṛtya parāyaṇā,* though Brahma, Vishnu, Rudra, Isana and Sadasiva are said to be in charge of the five acts, *sṛṣṭi,* creation, *sthiti,* maintenance, *samhāra,* withdrawal *tirodhāna,* concealment and *anugraha,* taking up again in grace the task of creation. They are the five corpses, *pañca pretas,* lifeless inert parts of the cot on which the life of Life, the pure consciousness Kameshwari is seated in blissful union with her Lord Kameshwara, the two in one in eternal union.

Yes, the worshipper of Sri Vidya cannot think of Kameshwari without simultaneously thinking of Kameshwara. It is true that Mahakali has as her consort Mahakala, Tara as her consort Akshobhya, Bhairavi her Bhairava and so on. But nowwhere the eternal couple are contemplated as so united as in the Vidya of Tripurasundari. It is a unique unity, the Two in One, the one united with oneself. In fact the worship of Sri Vidya wil bear no fruit if Shiva and Shakti are not identified as the one and the same. The Mantra consisting of fifteen letters is said to be constituted by certain letters pertaining to Shiva, certain letters pertaining to Shakti and certain others pertaining to both of them. The Sri Chakra is said to represent the one body of the Shiva couple *śrī cakram śivayor vapuḥ*. The Sadhaka of Sri Vidya sees the whole universe consisting of the mobile and the immobile *carācara* as the culmination of the static and dynamic poises of Shiva and Shakti, as the consummation of their consciousness-bliss. To him Shiva is in Shakti and Shakti is in Shiva and the whole universe is a standing testimony to this spiritual fact.

We have said that Tripurasundari is the prime Desire, the Divine Love that vivifies the whole creation, its overflow as the basic Bliss in everything. The visible symbol of the Divine in the universe as the light of knowledge, *jñāna*, the Tantric holds, is the Sun, while the visible symbol of the Divine as energising activity, *kriyā* is the fire. The moon is the visible symbol of the Divine as Desire, *icchā*, as the overflowing love, the sap of life, the basic bliss in everything. To the Vedic seers also, moon, the purifying Soma, *pavamāna soma* represents the Delight of existence, rasa, the sustaining sap. The Tantric says that when the great Goddess subjects herself to Time, she becomes the fifteen divisions of the Time factor, known as *tithis* which go to make the waxing or waning of the moon. So the fifteen digits, *kalās*, of the moon form the fifteen-lettered Panchadasi Mantra of the Goddess. She is the moon in her fullness *ṣoḍaśī* while the digits are her aspects, *tithi nityās*. So, in external worship, contemplation of the deity in the disc of the moon on fullmoon nights is said to be very efficacious. In the inner worship, the head-centre, the thousand-petalled lotus Sahasrara, is the seat of the mystic moon, the place of the illumined mind. It is the *sudhā sindhu*, the ocean of immortal nectar, the *mahāpadmavana,* the great lotus-grove wherefrom the Delight of all existence, the *rasa* of the union of Shiva and Shakthi surges forth. The Dhyana of the Deity in the head-centre, in the thousand-petalled lotus is said to be the highest form of inner worship.

To win the favour of this Goddess of grace and beauty, one should eschew ugliness in all its forms. The aspirant should be full of cheer and confidence that whatever happens to him would turn out to be for his best by the grace of the Goddess. Sundari is the pure consciousness, the essence of beings, in the microcosm as well as in the macrocosm[1]. So, a powerful Sadhana prescribed to realise Her is to go behind all willings of the mind without leaving the grasp in every process of knowledge and get at Her as the Universal Divine immanent in all things.[2] Then,

"All here shall be one day her sweetness's home,
All contraries prepare her harmony;
Towards her our knowledge climbs, our passion gropes,
In her miraculous rapture we shall dwell,
Her clasp will turn to ecstasy our pain.
Our self shall be one self with all through her.

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[1] पिण्डे चाण्डे जङ्गमसारः शुध्दा प्रज्ञा सुन्दर्युक्ता ।
—Vasishtha Ganapati Muni in *umāsahasram X. 2.*

[2] बोधे बोधे बोध्दुश्शक्तिं सङ्कल्पानां पश्चाद्भान्तीम् ।
अविमुच्यनू यो मनुते धीरो यत्किञ्चिद्वा ललिताऽवति तम् ॥
—Ibid.

In her confirmed because transformed in her,
Our life shall find in its fulfilled response
Above, the boundless hushed beatitudes,
Below, the wonder of the embrace divine."[1]

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[1] Sri Aurobindo: Savitri III-2.

BHUVANESHWARI

Coming fourth in the list of Dasa Mahà Vidyas, Bhuvaneshwari stands for the concept of Space. Kali, we said, represents the supreme Time-force, the Absolute Divine in self-duration. Bhuvaneshwari is the self-conceptive extension of the Supreme Being, the Space-concept in creation. The Tantrics conceive the Supreme Transcendant Absolute as *prakāśa*, the essential effulgence. When it is self-moved to manifest something out of it, there is a delimitation, the creation of phenomenon and circumstance. The *prakāśa* becomes *ākāśa*, the Space, the extended Vastness. The prefix *ā* in Sanskrit denotes dimunition, extension or boundary.[1] The *prakāśa*, the essential effulgence imposes on itself a limitation and becomes *ākāśa*, the Space, the Ether, the medium through which light moves and extends. *ākāśa* is also known as *antarikṣa*, the mid-region through which the divine possibilities high above are effectuated as actual manifestations down below. How does this self-extension take place? The Divine turning towards manifestation sees himself. *tadaikṣata*—"That saw", says the Upanishad. This self-perception leads to self-extension as Space, as the worlds of names and forms. From the vision of the Lord, the creation starts; *sṛṣṭi* proceeds from *dṛṣṭi*. This perceptive Power is Bhuvaneshwari. Perception results in knowledge and so she is the Jnana Shakti, the knowledge-force of the Supreme

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[1] आङ् ईषदर्थेऽभिव्याप्तौ सीमार्थे

—*amarakośa*

just as Tripurasundari is the Iccha Shakti, the Will-force of the Supreme. Again, Space is nothing but the extent of perception. What we call as space is the extent to which we can see, the range of our vision. As our vision widens, the Space grows and we are able to realise more and more of this self-extension of the Divine. The Divine's vision is vast and so is the Akasa, the Primordial Space from which all the worlds have come into being. The Sanskrit word for world is *bhuvana*, that which has come into being, *loka,* that which is perceived. And so, the Great Mother is called Bhuvaneshwari, the Sovereign of the worlds. As Akasa, she not only creates the worlds but also enters into them, sustains them, supports them and nourishes them, *jagat dhātri.* She is the all-pervasive force, permeating the whole fabric of creation as its warp and woof.

In the Veda, Bhuvaneshwari corresponds to Aditi, the great Mother of the gods. The Vedic seers use three great names when mentioning about the Supreme. These are *satyam ṛtam bṛhat.* Satyam is what is *sat* existent and denotes the essential truth of being. When this truth becomes organised for active creation, when it is formulated into a law of action, it is known as *ṛtam,* the Right. *bṛhat* is the vast self-awareness, the infinite consciousness through which *satyam* becomes *ṛtam. bṛhat* is *antarikṣa,* the mid-region between Satyam and Ritam, between the upper half *parārdha* and the lower half *aparārdha.* Aditi is this *bṛhat,* vast infinite consciousness, *aditir antarikṣam*[1], the space, *ākāśa,* the Supreme Ether *paramam vyoma.* She is not only the antithesis of *diti,* the separative dualising consciousness, but in her own right

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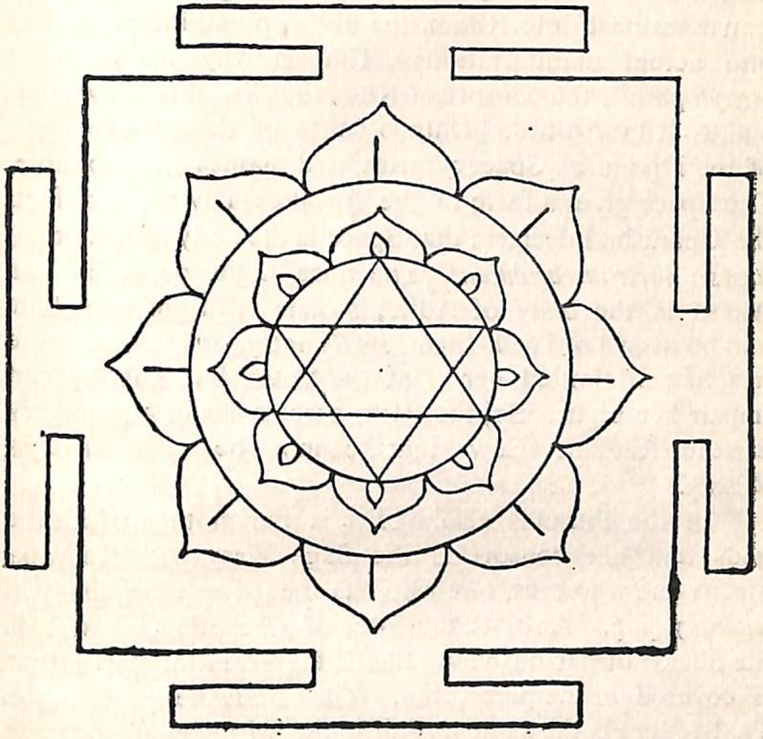
[1] Rig Veda I 89. 10.



BHUVANESHWARI

(*aditi,* from *ad* to eat, swallow) the all-swallowing existence, the all-enveloping consciousness. The Rishi calls her *anarvā*[1], without a horse, without a vehicle. Because she herself is the vehicle, the vehicle through which Satyam translates itself into Ritam, the divine possibilities project into actual manifestations. That is why she is called *ṛtasya patni*[2], the consort of Rita, that is, the force that makes Rita fruitful. Only because of the self-extension of the Divine as Space; forms and names are possible. The Space gives a form to the formless Divine. In fact, the Upanishad declares that Space is the body of Brahman, *ākāśa śarīram brahma.*[3] The pure Light pervading the Akasa is the body of Aditi; so she is full of splendour and possessed of Truth-Light, *jyotiṣmatīḥ, svarvatīḥ*[4]. She has herself limited her light as Akasa but nobody can impair her Light. So, the Rishi accosts her in an imagery as the Radiant Cow that cannot be slain *aghnyā dhenuḥ.*[5]

In the Puranas also, Aditi is the mother of all the gods and her consort is the Sage Kasyapa. Kasyapa means one who sees, one who has the perception, *paśyati iti kaśyapaḥ.* Aditi is the force of perception, as wife is the Shakti of her husband. She is the extent of Space that is covered in the perception. Thus Bhuvaneshwari in the Tantric lore is the same as Aditi, the Mother of the gods in the Vedic and Puranic tradition.

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[1] Rig Veda VII 40. 4.

[2] महीम् ऊ षु मातरं सुव्रतानाम् ऋतस्य पत्नीं अवसे हुवेम ।
—Yajur Veda 21.5.

[3] Taittiriya Upanishad.

[4] Rig Veda I 136. 3.

[5] Rig Veda IV 1. 6.

Another name for Bhuvaneshwari is *māyā*. Maya comes from the root, *mā*, to measure. The immeasurable is measured out as Space. This skill in executing the impossible, *viz*. measuring the immeasurable is extolled by the Advaitins as *aghaṭana ghaṭanā paṭiyasī*. In the Veda, Vishnu has this function of measuring out. He is the all-pervasive Vast (Vishnu, from the root *viṣ vyāptau,* to pervade) measuring the cosmic Space with his three strides, *trīṇi, padā vicakrame.*[1] His step is like an eye, extended in Heaven, *divīva cakṣur ātatam.*[2] And in an image of the Veda, Aditi is hymned as the wife of the all-pervading Vishnu. So, she is known as the Yoga maya of Vishnu, the yogic feat of the Lord and is acclaimed as marvellous *adbhutā*. The skill, the feat implied in measuring the immeasurable is interpreted as cunning, as magic, by the Mayavadins and to them Maya is synonym for illusion. But to the Tantric and the Vedic seer, Maya is no illusion. Maya is the great mother of the gods, Aditi, the vast infinite consciousness having the power to clothe itself in finite forms—the great sovereign of the worlds Bhuvaneshwari, the all-pervasive Space creating, sustaining and pervading the myriad worlds that are as real and concrete as their creator. Maya is the measured out Space, the prime Perception of the Supreme, the force of the first knowledge. It is in the sense of measured out knowledge that the Vedic seers use the term. "Maya meant for them the power of infinite consciousness to comprehend, contain in itself and measure out, that is to say, to form—for form is delimitation—Name and Shape out of the vast illimitable Truth of infinite existence. It is by Maya that static truth of essential being becomes ordered truth of active being — or, to put it in more metaphysical language, out of the supreme being in which all is all without barrier of separative consciousness emerges the phenomenal being in which all is in each and each is in all for the play of existence with existence, consciousness with consciousness, force with force, delight with delight. This play of all in each and each in all is concealed at first from us by the mental play or illusion of Maya which persuades each that he is in all but not all in him and that he is in all as a separated being not as a being always inseparably one with the rest of existence. Afterwards, we have to emerge from this error into the supramental play or the truth of Maya where the "each" and the "all" coexist in the inseparable unity of the one truth and the multiple symbol."[1]

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[1] Rig Veda I 22. 18.

[2] Rig Veda I 22. 20.

Bhuvaneshwari is also called *prakṛti*, the active Nature in the cosmic creation. Her forms and works are originated, witnessed, supported and enjoyed by the Cosmic Purusha. In the words of Sri Aurobindo, "Prakriti presents itself as an inconscient Energy in the material world, but, as the scale of consciousness rises, she reveals herself more and more as a conscious force and we perceive that even her inconscience concealed a secret consciousness; so too, conscious being is many in its individual souls, but in its self we can exprience it as one in all and one in its own essential existence".[2]

Thus, Bhuvaneshwari, the sovereign of the worlds that have come into being is the gaze of the Godhead, the self-extension of the Supreme as Space, the infinite vast consciousness of the conscious Being, denoted by Aditi, the illimitable's power of delimitation as forms and names, known as Maya, the dynamic nature-force of the passive Purusha, termed as Prakriti. In the words of the Veda, she, the infinite Space, is all that is born, she is all that is to be born, *aditir jātam aditir janitvam,*[1] even as Time, the restrainer is all that is born, he is all that is to be born, *yamo ha jāto yamo janitvam.*[2]

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[1] Sri Aurobindo: The Life Divine, ChapterXI II.

2 Sri Aurobindo: The Life Divine, Chapter II (Book II).

Indeed, Kali and Bhuvaneshwari as Time and Space, make the manifestations of names and forms possible. Kali arranges the timing and the sequence, while Bhuvaneshwari orders the event and the circumstance in the Sadhana. Bhuvaneshwari is the Akasa, the ether, while Kali is its *tanmātrā,* sound, vibration, the Pranic force. Bhuvaneshwari acts as a backdrop for Kali's work. She sets the stage for Kali's cosmic dance. Kali with her consort, the king of dancers, *natarāja*, dances to the beat of time in the consciousness-space, *cidambara*. This *ambara,* Space, is the *sabhā*, court or assembly, where all the myriad worlds of name and form are assembled.[3] In the macrocosm, Bhuvaneshwari is the Vast *bṛhat,* the Plenum, *bhūmā,* the midregion *antarikṣa* from which she brings into being the worlds. In the microcosm, she is the midregion between matter and spirit, the realm of the vital, the little space *dahara ākāśa* of the heart from which she brings into being the creatures. The vast Bhuvaneshwari resides in the little space of the heart of every being, while the eternal Kali acts there in the time-beat of Pranic force.

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[1] Rig Veda I. 89.10.

[2] Rig Veda I. 66.4

[3] *ambara* is a significant name for *ākāśā*, Space. *ambara, ambu,* the life-giving fostering waters, *ambaka,* the father, *ambikā*, the mother—all come from the same root which means to give life and sustain.

Sundari is immanent in the worlds ; at the same time she transcends the worlds. On the other hand, Bhuvaneshwari is very much in the worlds. She is the Space containing and sustaining the worlds. She is also like Sundari, effulgent like the rising sun, with four hands and three eyes. Like Sundari, she wields the noose and the goad. As she is not transcending the triple world, as she is not acting from high, above the mind, she does not, like Sundari have in her other two hands the sugarcane bow and the arrows, signifying mind and its faculties. Instead, one hand is raised to allay fear and the other extended to grant boons to the devotees.[1]

The Mantra of the World-Mother is the seed-sound *hrīm.* The Veda talks of the supernal Ether, *paramam vyoma* which is the repository of all the Vedic Riks and cosmic Powers. It is the *akṣara*, immutable, the *nityā vāk,* Eternal Word and is represented by the seed-sound 'Aum'. Now in the Tantra, the supernal Ether is the World-Mother Bhuvaneshwari whose sound-body is the *bijākṣara* Hrim. So Hrim is known as Tantric Pranava and enjoys the same reputation in the Tantric tradition as Aum in the Vedic and Vedantic wisdom. Hrim is called *hṛllekhā*, the *lekhā* or *rekhā* from *hṛt*, the streak from the heart. It is the line rising from the heart to join its parent point. Hrllekha connects the *daharākāśa*, the little space in the heart with the *bṛhat ākāśa,* the Vast stretch in Space. With the word Hrim the Vast Mother apportions her vastness in the hearts of created beings. In turn, the hearts yearn to go beyond the boundaries of shape into the vast immensities.

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[1] उद्यद्दिनद्युतिमिन्दुकिरीटां तुङ्गकुचां नयनत्रययुक्ताम् ॥
स्मेरमुखीं वरदाङ्कुशपाशाभीतिकरां प्रभजे भुवनेशीम् ॥

The vibrations of Hrim rise in a crescendo in space, break into peals of *nāda*, reverberate throughout the worlds and come back to the Source as a resonance from the heart of creation. Hrim is known to the Tantrics as *lajjā bīja*. Lajja, bashfulness or shyness is denoted by another word in Sanskrit *hrī* and so Hrim is known as lajja bija. Also bashfulness implies a *sañkoca*, shrinking, closing, not free. Hrim therefore denotes a manifestation which is not yet full and complete. A manifestation with further potentialities is meant. The worlds created by Bhuvaneshwari, are not perfect typal manifestations, they are the worlds that evolve, where progressive unfoldment is possible.

Hrim, as it is not different from the deity Bhuvaneshwari, is itself called Maya. This Maya as we have said is the knowledge that is measured out. In the Panchadasi Mantra of Sundari, Hrim is the crowning seed-sound in each of the three *kūṭas*, peaks of the Mantra. Each Hrim denotes a knowledge measured out in a particular way, the knowledge about the World, the knowledge pertaining to God and the World and then the knowledge in relation to God, World and Soul. Hrim is thus the sound of Space, the word of welkin, the yearning heart-cry of the created towards its creator.

Bhuvaneshwari is the Space that contains and sustains, the *ādhāra*, Support of all manifestations. So her worship grants to the Sadhaka immutable Peace, the support and sustenance of all the other spiritual plenitudes that will follow in due course. To get this Peace, the method is to make one's consciousness as vast as possible, to extend and expand onself so to say. In this wideness, in this extension, Peace descends. Or else one can plunge into the heart and contemplate on the little space *daharākāśa*. An immense Peace envelopes the whole being. Turning the eye away from all mutations found in the external world, whenever a person sees an object, instead of concentrating on the object, he can direct his gaze to the space between him and the object.[1] This leads to the experience of the witness Purusha in oneself. One sees everything as witness *sākṣī,* assents to it if he approves, *anumantā* and then in the process becomes the master of event and circumstance, *īśvara.* The culmination is when one develops in oneself a universal consciousness.

As Sri Aurobindo says: "As we are ignorant of our existence in Time except the small hour which we remember, so we are ignorant of ourselves in Space except the small span of which we are mentally and sensationally conscious, the single body that moves there and the mind and life which are identified with it, and we regard the environment as a not-self we have to deal with and use: it is this identification and this conception that form the life of the ego. Space according to one view is only the co-existence of things or of souls; the Sankhya affirms the plurality of souls and their independent existence, and their co-existence is then only possible by the unity of Nature force, their field experience, Prakriti: but even granting this, the co-existence is there and it is in the end co-existence in one Being. Space is the self-conceptive extension of that one Being; it is the one spiritual Existence displaying the field of movement of its Conscious-Force in its own self as Space. Because that Conscious-Force concentrates in manifold bodies, lives, minds

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[1] स्थूलविकारान् परिमुञ्चन्त्या निर्मलनभसि स्थितया दृष्ट्या ।
मज्जन्त्या वा दहराकाशे लोकेश्वर्याः करुणां लभते ॥
—Vasishtha Ganapati Muni in *umāsahasram* X–2.

and the soul presides over one of them, therefore, our mentality is concentrated in this and regards this as itself and all the rest as not-self, just as it regards its one life on which it concentrates by a similar ignorance as its whole term of existence cut off from the past and the future. Yet we cannot really know our own mentality, without knowing the one Mind, our own vitality without knowing the one life, our own body without knowing the one Matter; for not only is their nature determined by the nature of that, but by that their activities are at every moment being influenced and determined. But, with all this sea of being flowing in on us, we do not participate in its consciousness, but know of it only so much as can be brought into the surface of our minds and co-ordinated there. The world lives in us, thinks in us, forms itself in us; but we imagine that it is we who live, think, become separately by ourselves and for ourselves."[1] By the grace of this Universal Mother, Bhuvaneshwari, the Sadhaka realises that his body is a limb of the Universal Body, his vital a portion of the Universal Pranic force, his mind, a segment of the Universal Mind and his spirit part and parcel of the Universal Spirit. He has been all along thinking that he lives in the universe. He now realises that the universe lives in him.

> " A vast Unknown is around us and within;
> All things are wrapped in the dynamic One:
> A subtle link of union joins all life.
> Thus all creation is a single chain "[2]

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[1] Sri Aurobindo: The Life Divine, Chapter XI.

[2] Sri Aurobindo: Savitri II. 2.

TRIPURA BHAIRAVI

The Upanishads talk of three poises of the Absolute Transcendental Divine, the poises which are the precursors of creation. "He desired, *so' kāmayata*, that he should become manifold." This prime desire is *icchā śakti*, the will-force, the Tripurasundari of Dasa Maha Vidyas. Then there is the second poise: "That saw, *tadaikṣata*". This perception determines what is known as Space and results in knowledge-force, the *jñāna śakti*. Bhuvaneshwari is the name given to this poise. The third is the *tapas* of the Divine. "He energised himself: *sa tapo' tapyata*", says the Upanishad. This *tapas* is the action-force *kriyā śakti* and is denoted by the great name, Tripura Bhairavi.

What is Tapas? In the words of Sri Aurobindo, "Tapas means literally heat, afterwards any kind of energism, askesis, austerity of conscious force acting upon itself or its object. The world was created by Tapas in the form, says the ancient image, of an egg, which being broken, again by Tapas, heat of incubation of conscious force, the Purusha emerged, Soul in Nature, like a bird from the egg."[1] The self-awareness of the Absolute, the force of consciousness, when it is concentrated on itself and energised for action, becomes Tapas.

In the Veda, this heat of life, this energy of the Divine Dynamis, this consciousness, Tapas is represented by the God Agni. It is the *cidagni*, the flame of consciousness that burns in every being. All activity is supported

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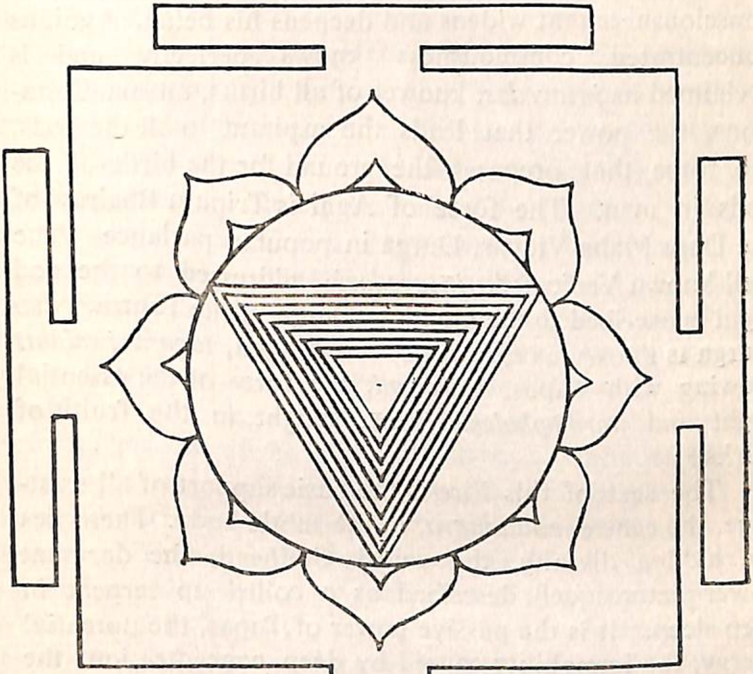
[1] The Life Divine: Chapter XII.



TRIPURA BHAIRAVI

by this first God, the divine power in man, the essential energy through which all the gods accomplish their immortal work in the mortal. It is this fire of aspiration that drives man to exceed himself, it is this force of consciousness that widens and deepens his being. Agni, as concentrated consciousness knows perfectly and is acclaimed as *jātavedas*, knower of all births, all manifestations, the power that leads the aspirant to all the gods, the force that prepares the ground for the birth of the gods in man. The force of Agni is Tripura Bhairavi of the Dasa Maha Vidyas, Durga in popular parlance. The well-known Vedic Rik *jātavedase*[1] addressed to the god Agni is ascribed to the Goddess Durga in the Tantra. Also Durga is known as *agnivarṇā* flame-hued, *tapasā jwalantī* glowing with Tapas, *vairocani*, the force of the essential Light and *karmaphaleṣu juṣṭā*, sought in the fruit of works.[2]

The seat of this Fire is the basic support of all existence, the centre, *mulādhāra*, in the subtle body. There lies the hidden divinity, the veiled Godhead, the dormant power picturesquely described as a coiled up serpent in deep sleep. It is the passive power of Tapas, the potential energy, the immobility caused by deep concentration, the sleeping Shakti that is termed as Tripura Bhairavi. She is Tripura because like Sundari, she is immanent in the triad, the triple existence. She is the smouldering smoky flame[3] in

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[1] Rig Veda I. 97.1.

[2] तामग्निवर्णां तपसा ज्वलन्तीं वैरोचनीं कर्मफलेषु जुष्टाम् ।
दुर्गां देवीं शरणमहं प्रपद्ये सुतरसि तरसे नमः ॥

[3] त्रिकोणान्तरदीपिका

—Lalita Sahasranama

the prime triangle *moola trikoṇa* of the Muladhara. She commands the physical consciousness and the sub-conscient and appears to be slumbering as a quiscent force in the heart of matter. Why is she known as Bhairavi, the Terrible ?

Tapas, we have said, is a concentration of consciousness. When there is concentration, it has to be centred round a particular thing or place, it has to be in a limited sphere. Otherwise there will be a diffusion. This delimitation, demarcation, confining is necessary for creation. In order to deliver herself unto creation, the Divine Shakti undergoes a confinement bearing the concentrated seed of energy. When the Supreme does Tapas, energises himself there is a self-directing of his force resulting in a concentrated exclusive action. There is a delimitation of the illimitable, a measuring out of the immeasurable, a casting in finite forms out of the infinite formless, a concentrated activity employed out of a diffuse all-pervasive deployment. Concentration results in paying attention to the particular, being absorbed in a limited field of working. One is aware of the particular and not so aware of the rest. This unawareness, this forgetting of the rest in order to concentrate on the particular thing on hand is a byproduct of concentration. When the Divine, wanting to manifest, exclusively concentrates on a particular aspect or action of himself, he ignores the rest of himself. This primordial ignoring is the origin of ignorance. Thus ignorance is a concomitant of exclusive concentration, Tapas which is necessary for manifestation. The Divine has to employ this device in order to create. And we find this device in all the workings of Nature. Especially in material Nature, there is so much absorption in the working, so much identification with the thing, so much self-forgetful concentration in action, that it looks as though that nothing else exists except that and matter is the only thing that matters. In fact this self-oblivion and self-forgetfulness, this exclusive concentration on the particular to the detriment of the general, seems to be the law of Nature. But ignorance *avidyā,* is not total absence of knowledge, *vidyāyāḥ abhāvaḥ,* but it is partial knowledge, an incomplete awareness, *īṣat ūnā vidyā*. As Sri Aurobindo says, "the ignorance is a frontal power of that all-consciousness which limits itself in a certain field, within certain boundaries to a particular operation of knowledge, a particular mode of conscious working, and keeps back all the rest of its knowledge in waiting as a force behind it. All that is thus hidden is an occult store of Light and Power for the All-Consciousness to draw upon for the evolution of our being in Nature; there is a secret working which fills up all the deficiencies of the frontal Ignorance, acts through its apparent stumblings, prevents them from leading to another final result than that which the All-Knowledge has decreed, helps the soul in the Ignorance to draw from its experience, even from the natural personality's sufferings and errors, what is necessary for its evolution and to leave behind what is no longer utilisable. This frontal power of Ignorance is a power of concentration in a limited working, much like that power in our human mentality by which we absorb ourselves in a particular object and in a particular work and seem to use only so much knowledge, only such ideas as are necessary for it,—the rest, which are alien to it or would interfere with it are put back for the moment; yet, in reality, all the time it is the indivisible consciousness which we are that has done the work to be done, seen the thing that has to be seen—that and not any fragment of consciousness or any exclusive ignorance in us is the silent knower and the worker; so is it too with this frontal power of concentration of the All-Consciousness within us."[1]

But unfortunately, this ignorance, this limitation of consciousness imposes on us a fragmentation and a separation. This idea of separation, this partial knowledge is the root-cause of fear. If we are able to understand that there is only the One without a second, there is no cause for any fear. Fear arises from another; not from oneself; it happens when one admits a second other than oneself *dvitīyāt vai bhayam bhavati.* As the Upanishad[2] says: "When the Spirit that is within us finds the Invisible Bodiless Undefinable and Unhoused Eternal his refuge and firm foundation, then he has passed beyond the reach of Fear. But when the Spirit that is within us makes for himself even a little difference in the Eternal, then he has fear, yea, the Eternal himself becomes a terror to such a knower who thinks not". Therefore, the Goddess who is the Tapas, the exclusive concentration of the Divine, holding in reserve in herself the manifestations that have to come about, the divine possibilities that have to unfold appears as the frontal Ignorance inciting fear and the resultant pain and grief, wrong-doing, discord, evil, as the Bhairavi, the Terrible Mother. In the subtle body, her seat is in Muladhara where lies coiled in inconscient slumber the dreadful serpent Kundalini.

But to whom is the Goddess Tripura Bhairavi dreadful? She is dreadful to those who cling to the separate consciousness, who find pleasure in division and discord, who rest content in the somnambulistic rounds of the physical and subconscient activities. For those who strive towards progress, for those who want to exceed themselves by their Tapasya, she is the Bhairavi who destroys fear. She is the potential energy in the subtle body, the coiled up sluggish serpent apparently sleeping in the Muladhara. But it will not take long for her to become the kinetic energy, for the serpent to uncoil, wake up, raise its hood and swiftly shoot upwards,—unfolding the vast illimitable possibilities, opening out higher and higher vistas, manifesting greater and greater capacities in the being of the aspirant. Because for any creative action, two powers are necessary, the passive and the active. When the Goddess reserves her energy, keeps to herself the Tapas, the self-absorbed concentration in her immobile status, she is known as Tripura Bhairavi. When she releases forth her energy, deploying the Tapas, the heat of concentration in manifold movement she becomes Tripura Sundari.

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[1] Sri Aurobindo: The Life Divine, Book II, Chapter IV.

[2] Taittiriya Upanishad II. 7: Sri Aurobindo's translation.

The Terrible and the Beautiful are the two faces of the One Divine. They are the obverse and reverse sides of the same golden coin. Bhairavi and Sundari, both are Tripuras, manifest in the triad. The paths of knowledge leading to their realisation are both known as *śrī vidyā*. The Mantras of them both are comprised of three portions *khaṇḍas* or peaks *kūṭas* and are known by the same names of *vāgbhava, kāmarāja and śakti*. Both the Goddesses are two poles of one being, Bhairavi, posited in *mulādhāra*, the base-lotus and Sundari seated in *sahasrāra*, the head-lotus in the subtle body. Between them, they complete the circuit. From the still reservoir of Tapas in the Muladhara course forth channels of energy to the ocean of nectar *sudhāsindhu*, to the immortal consciousness in the Sahasrara, which in turn surges forth in million waves of action pouring down and filling up the reservoir of energy in Muladhara. The tapasya of Bhairavi makes the ascent of the being possible; the responding grace of Sundari accomplishes the descent of the Deity. The energies that are derived from the descent are again thrown up in the circuit and an ascent is again made to bring forth a further descent. This cycle of ascent and descent goes on between the two poles of consciousness, between matter and spirit, between Bhairavi in the Muladhara and Sundari in the Sahasrara centre. The sleeping serpent Kundalini wakes up, rises its hood, shoots forth, licks up the nectar in the head-lotus, glides back into the abyss of Muladhara and again shoots forth with renewed energy to attain greater heights. Sundari pours; Bhairavi burns; *ārdram jwalati*. As the fire of Tapas, as the flame of mounting aspiration, Bhairavi, striking terror in the hearts of the indolent, burns up all the blemishes and weaknesses and purifies the being; then she prepares and perfects and makes the being ready to receive the *rasa*, the essential delight, the basic bliss, *soma* that is poured down by Sundari. Sundari's is the Tapas released, the concentration of consciousness deployed in manifold action creating the sap of life, the waves of bliss that surge forth out of the moon-chambers of Sahasrara. The immortal nectar, the essential delight represented by moon, *soma*, in the head-centre is the sap and sustenance of all life and so it is known as food, *somo vā annam*. And Agni, fire, is the eater of this food, *agnir annādaḥ*, the consumer of this Delight. By the interaction of fire and moon, *agnī* and *soma*, by the grace of Bhairavi and Sundari, the aspirant energises himself by Tapasya and receives in himself the out-pourings of the basic bliss in all created things. The Vedic Rishis declared that the *soma rasa* cannot be poured into an unbaked vessel; the vessel will break. The Ananda of Sundari cannot be borne in a body not baked by the fire of Tapasya of Bhairavi. Soma can be consumed only by Agni. The shooting tongues of flame of pure and sincere aspiration alone can taste the dripping honey-bliss of immortal delight.[1]

If it is hazardous to pull into oneself the divine rapture welling from the head-centre without proper preparation effected by the basic centre, what is the safe course of action? One should undergo an arduous course of Tapasya and purification. But in spiritual matters, how far can one rely on self-effort alone? Nothing lasting is possible in Yoga without the grace of the Divine. Bhuvaneshwari is the Goddess who arranges the action of Bhairavi and the response of Sundari. Seated in the heart centre, she brings the matter and the spirit together for fruitful interaction. In fact, Tripura Sundari, Bhuvaneshwari and Tripura Bhairavi form the Trinity. The discipline leading to their realisation is Sri Vidya; their actions are inter-connected and inseparable. The grace of any one of the deities automatically brings to the aspirant the grace of the other two deities of the Trinity. In the subtle body, Tripurasundari is in the Sahasrara, the thousand-petalled lotus, the seat of the moon, the reservoir of Divine Delight; Bhuvaneshwari is in the heart-space, *hṛdaya ākāśa, anāhata,* the seat of the sun, the source of knowledge; Tripura Bhairavi is in the basic centre, *mulādhāra,* the seat of the fire, the initiation of activity. From the sun, both moon and fire get the light. It is meet that the heart-centre governs the head-centre and the basic centre; the knowledge in the heart, *jñāna śakti* guides the will in the head *icchā śakti* and the activity in the lowest centre, *kriyā śakti*. It is proper that Bhuvaneshwari arranges for the interplay of Sundari and Bhairavi. How does Bhuvaneshwari arrange this? She arranges through Kali, the great Transformer. Bhuvaneshwari is in the heart-space as a back-drop to the frontal activity of Kali in the heart. The secret of the Sadhana is to give oneself completely to the guiding deity in the heart and be guided by it. Then whatever necessary will happen and the Sadhaka can have a taste of the flaming ecstasies of Bhairavi and Sundari quite safely.

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[1] This is the esoteric significance of the outward sacrifice, *agnistoma yaga*, prescribed in the Vedas—the ritual of the rapture-flame.

The Mantra of Tripura Bhairavi is comprised of the three seed-letters—*hsraim hsklrim hssrauḥ*. The Deity is contemplated in Dhyana as one who has the effulgence of a thousand rising suns, with a red garment on her blood-smeared breasts adorned by a string of skulls. Her lotus-like face bears a nice smile. She has three eyes and wears a jewelled crown with the crest of the moon. She has the rosary and the gesture of knowledge; the other two hands are engaged in allaying fear and granting protection.[1] The features described bring out the terrible aspects and the Tripura characteristics of the Deity. But why has she got also the characteristics of *vāk devatā*, the Goddess of speech?

Tripura Bhairavi is in *mulādhāra* which is also the seat of *parā vāk*. The Tantrics classify the *vāk*, the Word as *parā*, the word which is beyond, unmanifest but turned towards manifestation, *paśyantī*, the word that perceives, *madhyamā*, the word in the intermediate subtle region and *vaikharī*, the articulated word from the throat. It is in the Muladhara, in the basic centre in the subtle body that the Word as a concentrated consciousness, Tapas, as a reservoir of the unmanifested potent power, *parā vāk*, abides. And so Tripura Bhairavi is *parā vāk*, just as Tara is the *paśyantī vāk*. That is why Tripura Bhairavi has the characteristics of the Goddess of speech.

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[1] उद्यद्भानुसहस्रकान्तिमरुणक्षौमां शिरोमालिकां
रक्तालिप्तपयोधरां जपवटीं विद्यामभीतिं वरम् ।
हस्ताब्जैर्दधतीं त्रिनेत्रविलसद् वक्त्रारविन्दश्रियं
देवीं बद्धहिमांशुरत्नमुकुटां वन्दे समन्दस्मिताम् ॥

Also, Muladhara is the centre of sex-energy. The Word that creates the cosmos is transmitted as sex for the purpose of procreation in ordinary life. The Sanskrit word *brahma*, which is Vedic, means the Word and *brahmacarya* means 'having the movement in the Word'. It is for this reason that the same word *brahmacarya* is used to denote the conservation of sex-energy as well. The worshipper of Tripura Bhairavi, by the grace of the Goddess accomplishes the concentration of consciousness in his mind, speech and body *mano* vāk *kāya*. In the physical, he learns to stop the downward course of the life-streams, conserve the sex-energy in a concentrate poise and turn it upwards *ūrdhva retah*. Then *retas*, the sexual energy becomes *ojas*, the luminous energy of power and potentialities. In speech, he learns to go behind the spoken word and arrive at the concentrated poise of *parā vāk*. Thus speech is conserved and turned back to its origin *parā* and held in a concentrated consciousness. Likewise in the realm of mind the aspirant learns to look behind all ideas, all thoughts and arrive at the one idea, at the one thought which he learns to hold in his concentrated consciousness. Thus the grace of Tripura Bhairavi acts in thought, word and deed of the Sadhaka. She removes the fear, destroys the Ignorance, makes the Sadhaka surmount all difficulties. She is the fiery bridge closing the chasm that gulfs the narrowness of matter and the immensity of the spirit.

> "This is our deepest need to join once more
> What now is parted, opposite and twain,
> Remote in sovereign spheres that never meet
> Or fronting like far poles of Night and Day
> We must fill the immense lacuna we have made,
> Re-wed the closed finite's lonely consonant
> With the open vowels of Infinity,
> A hyphen must connect Matter and Mind,
> The narrow isthmus of the ascending soul:
> We must renew the secret bond in things,
> Our hearts recall the lost divine Idea,
> Reconstitute the perfect word, unite
> The Alpha and the Omega in one sound;
> Then shall the spirit and Nature be at one.
> Two are the ends of the mysterious plan."[1]

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[1] Sri Aurobindo: Savitri I. 4.

CHINNAMASTA

"Rati and Manmatha, the loving couple, are lying in close embrace and the Goddess is standing on them. Stark naked, her nudity does not strike the eye as she is robed in dazzling light. She has no head at all. A headless trunk with two arms held aloft is her peculiar form. In one hand, she holds her own severed head and in the other a pair of scissors. From the headless neck three streams of blood gush forth. The middle stream is drunk by her own mouth in the severed head held in her hand while the other two streams are drunk by two attendants standing on either side of the Goddess."[1]

Thus the Tantra describes the form of Chinnamasta, the sixth of the Dasa Maha Vidyas. How can a headless trunk have life? How can it hold its own head chopped off in its hand? And the ghastly sight of blood spouting forth and being drunk by the very head that has been cut off and by the two attendants! How can such a form be fit for worship? How can it be invoked to elevate and ennoble man? All these questions naturally arise in the minds of aspirants. The whole thing is incomprehensible. Whenever the human mind fails to understand something, it does not admit that it may be due to the thing being

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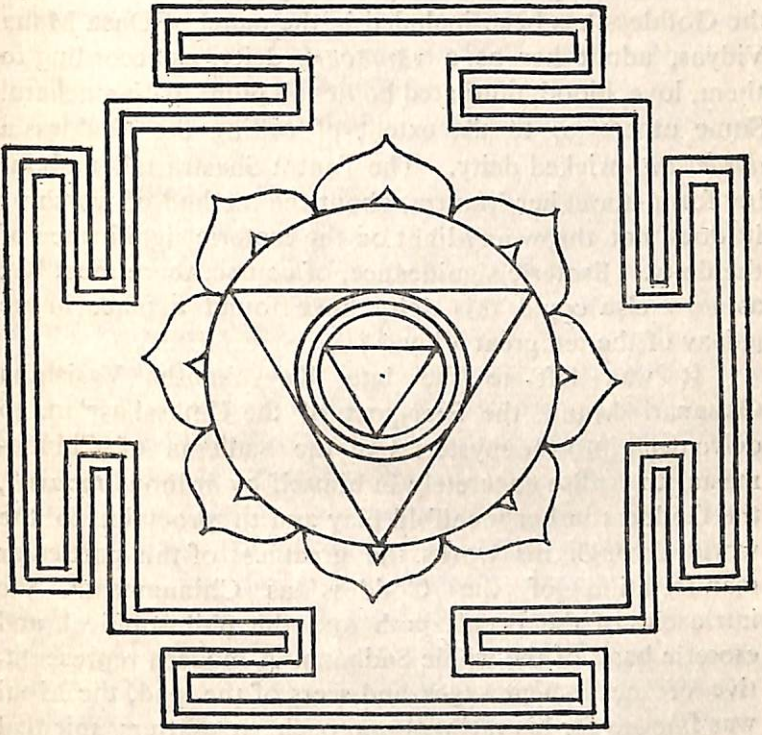
[1] प्रत्यालीढपदां सदैव दधतीं छिन्नं शिरः कर्त्रिकां
दिग्वस्त्रां स्वकबन्धशोणितसुधाधारां पिबन्तीं मुदा ।
नागाबद्धशिरोमणिं त्रिनयनां हृद्युत्पलालङ्कृतां
रत्यासक्तमनोभवोपरि दृढां ध्यायेत् जपासन्निभाम् ।।



CHINNAMASTA

beyond the ken of human understanding; on the other hand it looks down upon the thing as inferior. Many wise men have classed Chinnamasta as an inferior deity, a *grāma devatā,* a Goddess fit to be worshipped by the uncultured village folk. Some, intrigued by the fact that the Goddess has been included in the panel of Dasa Maha Vidyas, admit her as a *vāmācāra* deity, as according to them, love, blood, mutilated bodies all point to Vamachara. Some others go to the extent of calling the Goddess a *durdevatā*, wicked deity. The Tantra Shastra talks about her form, about her Mantra, about the method of worship; it does not throw any light on the esoteric significance of the deity. Esoteric significance, of course, there must be; as how else could this deity have found a place in the galaxy of the ten great Vidyas?

It was left to the late Kavyakantha Vasishtha Ganapati Muni, the Seer-poet of the Umasahasram, to delve deep into the mysteries of the Sadhana of Chinnamasta, to realise concretely in himself by arduous *tapasyā*, the Goddess in her manifold play and to proclaim to the world through his works the greatness of this particular manifestation of the Goddess as Chinnamasta, the intricacies of the occult path and the philosophical and esoteric basis of the whole Sadhana. A modern representative of the ancient sages and seers of the land, the Muni was famous for his rational approach to matters spiritual and for his scientific bent of mind. A versatile genius, he could straight go to the heart of a subject and have an instantaneous grasp of the whole matter. Testimony from such a person cannot be slighted. Vasishtha Muni realised in himself Chinnamasta, the Goddess of severed head to such an extent that his cranium split asunder even as he was alive and thenceforth people could see a streak of glowing light about the Muni's head, coming through an opening at the top of the head, as it were.[1] All these have been recorded and happily amongst us are there many persons scattered throughout the length and breadth of this country who had the good fortune to see Vasishtha Muni—*nāyana*, as they used to call him affectionately—in flesh and blood and to come under the umbrella of his magnetic personality and unbounded compassion. Let us unravel the mysteries of this deity, with the aid of his perceptions.

We have said that Light *prakāśa* and Sound *nāda* are the precursors of creation. Prakasa when it becomes delimited as Akasa, Space, is Bhuvaneshwari. When the delimitation takes the form of duration, Time, it is Kali. When Prakasa gets involved in creation, when it becomes the immanent principle in everything, at the same time transcending it, it is Sundari. The unexpressed, unmanifest Sound turned towards Creation in a concentrated consciousness is Bhairavi while the Sound perceiving itself, the Seeing Word is Tara. The interaction of Prakasa and Nada, Light and Sound to precipitate the creation is known to the Tantrics as the great Goddess Chinnamasta. The Supreme is Truth-Consciousness-Bliss, *sat cit ānanda* and the Vedic Rishis called these poises of the Supreme as three states, as three worlds constituting the higher hemisphere *parārdha*. When the Supreme Being extended himself as creation, his three states, his triple world came down in creation as the three worlds *prithwī,* earth, *antarikṣam,* mid-region and *dyauḥ,* heaven—the lower hemisphere, *aparārdha.* This lower triple is the three worlds of *annam* physical *prāna* vital and *manas* mental of the being evolving in creation. The interaction of Light and Sound produces such speed and force that the lower triple is almost precipitated out of the higher triple. It is almost cut asunder from the original source. The whole purpose of creation is for the One to delight itself in separate existences as the Many. The Many have to be cut off from the One to become separate existences. The umbilical cord connecting the mother and the child has to be incised to ensure the separate life of the child. The interaction of Light and Sound is so terrific and violent that it almost cuts off the creation from the creator. That is why Chinnamasta is represented as cutting off the head, rending asunder the Original Source and the creation which is nothing but the extended enveloping body *varṣma* of the creator. In the world of phenomena, the interaction of Light and Sound results in thunder and lightning. Chinnamasta is the thunder-clap and the lightning-flash. 'Shining like a streak of lightning', *vidyullekheva bhasvarā,* says the Upanishad. That is why Chinnamasta is known as *vajra vairocanīyā.* She is the force of Virochana, the specially luminous (*viśeṣeṇa rocatė iti virocanaḥ*). Who is this Virochana? It is the Supreme himself, the Primordial Prakasa. Vajra is her power which he wields. We know that Vajra is the weapon of Indra. Who then is Indra?

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[1] कपालभेदात् परं मुनीन्द्रस्य अस्य चतुर्दशवत्सरजीवयात्रासु यावद्देहपातं कोऽपि बाष्पवायुरिव शक्तिविशेषः अनवरतं मस्तकादुपरि आकाशात् शिरोद्वारेण अन्तः प्रविश्य यातायातविहारं श्वासवत् आतन्वानो विलसति स्म ॥

—Sti Kapali Sastriar in *Vāsiṣṭha Vaibhavam.*

Indra, in the Veda, is the paramount God. In the Puranas, he has been relegated to a subordinate position in charge of all the denizens of paradise, the prime portfolio being given to either Shiva or Vishnu. But to the Vedic seers, Indra is higher than all the cosmos *viśvasmāt indra uttaraḥ*. He is the overlord of our triple existence of matter, life and spirit and master of *swar* which is the luminous world of the Divine Mind. He is *sat* of the Supreme self-manifested in the Divine Mind. In the words of Sri Aurobindo, "he comes down into our world as the Hero with the shining horses and slays darkness and division with his lightnings, pours down the life-giving heavenly waters, finds in the trace of the hound, Intuition, the lost or hidden illuminations, makes the Sun of Truth mount high in the heaven of our mentality". Chinnamasta is the *śakti,* force of Indra. He wields her as his weapon and smites Vritra who covers with his darkness the luminous rays of pure knowledge. He lashes the clouds with his lightning whip, making them surrender the life-giving waters. Chinnamasta is the thunder destroying all the anti-divine forces; she is the hidden radiance in the heart of the cloud. Ruling over the Divine Mind, she acts through the human mind and is the sense behind the senses. There are five senses of action, *karmendriyas* and five senses of knowledge *jñānendriyas*; the mind is considered as the eleventh sense by Indian thinkers. In fact, it is known as *antaḥ karaṇa,* the inner instrument through which the eye sees, the ear hears and the other senses carry out their functions. The Sanskrit term for sense is significant; it is *indriya,* the power of *Indra*, the ruler of the mind. Thus one becomes a master of his senses by the grace of Indra's force, Chinnamasta. The most powerful activity of the senses is the physical sensual activity translated in the language of sex. The great Goddess is depicted as trampling with her feet Rati and Manmatha joined in amorous union. This is the picturesque and dramatic way of the Tantric to drive home the fact that the worship of Indra's force Chinnamasta grants complete mastery over the sex-impulse and other impulses of the senses *indriyas*.[1]

Chinnamasta represents the indomitable force, the striking power of the Supreme. What is the difference between her action and the action of Kali? Kali's action is fierce and terrible and she is known as Chandi. But Chinnamasta is more terrible than the terrible Kali and therefore she is known as Prachanda Chandi. Kali represents the power of transformation, the force of evolution in creation. Her action is no doubt strong and swift; but she works with the aid of Time. Prachandachandi is the Lord's weapon, the crash of thunder, Vajra; she does not take time, she destroys instantaneously. Kali is the vital force *prāṇa śakti* while Prachandachandi is the electric energy *vidyut śakti*. Kali is in the heart of beings. She is the power of strong emotions and quick actions. Chinnamasta has her seat in the head, in the place between the eyebrows, in the *ājñā* centre. She is the power of will and vision.

In the subtle body, the whole nervous organisation is managed by electric energy by means of *nādis*. These *nādis* are represented in the physical body by what we call as nerves but their action is subtle and in the psychic body they are channels through which electric energy passes. The Supreme Shakti in the form of electric energy is the motive power of the whole creation, This power of lightning, Vajra Vairochani, spreads herself along myriads of channels enveloping the whole cosmos. When a being is created this energy enters into the being through what is known as *brahmarandhra,* the aperture of Brahman which corresponds in the physical to the topmost point in the head. Having entered the body, this energy again spreads throughout the psychic body by means of Nadis, sustaining and upholding the separate existence of the being. Out of these myriad Nadis flowing through the body, three are important. They are Ida, Pingala and Sushumna. Sushumna is the central Nadi in the body terminating in Brahmarandhra. It is encased by the backbone[1] and the spinal column. On either side of Sushumna flow Ida and Pingala. Their extremities are said to be at the root of the two nostrils, the centre between the eyebrows. This centre is the *ājñā* centre, the centre of will and vision where the three Nadis meet. This is the *triveṇī sangama* of the Yogis, the place where the rivers Ganga, Yamuna and the hidden Saraswati, *antarvāhinī,* meet. In fact, the code names in the Tantra for Ida, Pingala and Sushumna are the names of the rivers Ganga, Yamuna and Saraswati.

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[1] यत् तवासनमशेषमोहनौ विद्युदक्षि रतिसूनसायकौ ।
एतदिन्द्रसखि भाषते त्वया तावुभावपि बलादधः कृतौ ॥
—Vasishtha Ganapati Muni in *pracaṇḍacaṇḍī triśati.*

We have said that Chinnamasta is located in the Ajna centre. She is there in a concentrated form. But her activity is in the Sushumna where she traverses up and down as the sustaining current of electric energy and power. Similarly the forces of her two attendants traverse through the Nadis on either side, Ida and Pingala. Prachandachandi is the current traversing through Sushumna while the charming *varṇinī* and the terrific

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[1] One can recall with advantage the Puranic story that Indra's Vajrayudha, representing the cosmic electric energy was fashioned out of the backbone of the Sage Dadichi.

dākinī are the currents traversing through Ida and Pingala.[1] Thus is explained the significance of the three streams of blood emanating from the headless trunk of the Goddess. The middle stream representing the electric energy passing through Sushumna is consumed by the head of the Goddess itself as Chinnamasta is the energy in Sushumna. The streams on either side are consumed by the attendants Varnini and Dakini representing Ida and Pingala.

Does a person understand that the same electric energy Vajra Vairochani which motivates the cosmos, motivates him as well, that he and the cosmos are connected by myriads of nerve-currents or life-energies? As the Katha Upanishad says, "a hundred and one are the nerves of the heart, and of all these only one issues out through the head of a man; by this his soul mounts up to its immortal home, but the rest lead him to all sorts and conditions of births in his passing."[2] Thus the Brahmarandhra is the only aperture that connects the flow of energy in the microcosm with that of the macrocosm. When a being is created, the Vidyut Shakti enters the being through the aperture Brahmarandhra. Then the aperture is closed. Even in the being, there is no free flow of this electric energy. There are knots *granthis* in the Sushumna channel which impede the free flow of

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[1] सूक्ष्मनाडिकादेहधारिणीम् ।
घोरपातकव्रातहारिणीम् ॥
चारुवर्णिनीप्रीतिलालिताम् ।
भीमडाकिनीवीर्यनन्दिताम् ॥
—Vasishtha Ganapati Muni in *pracaṇḍacaṇḍi triśati.*

[2] Katha Upanishad: II. 3.16. Sri Aurobindo's translation.

Shakti. The knots have to be cut asunder, the head has to be slit open to re-establish the free flow of the divine consciousness in and out of the separate existence that is known as human body. This is the significance of the Goddess cutting asunder her own head. With the pair of scissors which she holds in her hand, she first cuts the creation away from its Lord. Then with the same scissors, she helps the aspirant to incise his earthly moorings, cuts the knots of ignorance for him. The head represents the summit; on the one hand it indicates *sat* the Supreme Existence, the original source from which the creation has started and on the other it indicates the mind, the transmutation of *sat* in the lower triple world of our existence. Cutting off the head of the Goddess symbolises the destruction of mind. By this, one should not run away with the impression that rending asunder the head is a mere figure of speech. When the mind is annihilated, this happens as a concrete experience to the Yogis. The Taittiriya Upanishad explicitly mentions this experience in the words *vyapohya śirṣa kapālė*[1], having removed the two parts of the cranium. We have already stated that Vasishtha Ganapati Muni had this concrete experience in his lifetime. Sri Aurobindo mentions about the breaking asunder of the lid of mind. To quote his words: "A highest spiritual transformation must intervene on the psychic or psycho-spiritual change; the psychic movement inward to the inner being, the Self or Divinity within us, must be completed by an opening upward to a supreme spiritual status or a higher existence. This can be done by our opening into what is above us, by an ascent of consciousness into the ranges of overmind and supramental nature in which the sense of self and spirit is ever unveiled and permanent and in which the self-luminous instrumentation of the self and spirit is not restricted or divided as in our mind-nature, life-nature, body-nature. This also the psychic change makes possible; for as it opens us to the cosmic consciousness now hidden from us by many walls of limiting individuality, so also it opens us to what is now superconscient to our normality because it is hidden from us by the strong, hard and bright lid of mind,—mind constricting, dividing and separative. The lid thins, is slit, breaks asunder or opens and disappears under the pressure of the psycho-spiritual change and the natural urge of the new spiritualised consciousness towards that of which it is an expression here. This effectuation of an aperture and its consequences may not at all take place if there is only a partial psychic emergence satisfied with the experience of the Divine Reality in the normal degrees of the splritualised mind: but if there is any awakening to the existence of these higher supernormal levels, then an aspiration towards them may break the lid or operate a rift in it."[1]

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[1] अन्तरेण तालुके । य एष स्तन इवावलम्बते । सेन्द्रयोनिः ।
यत्रासौ केशान्तो विवर्तते । व्यपोह्य शीर्षकपाले ॥

Between the two palates, this that hangs down like the breast of a woman, is the womb of Indra; yea, where the hair at its end whirls round like an eddy, there it divides the skull and pushes through it

—Sri Aurobindo's translation.

And again, "If the rift in the lid of mind is made, what happens is an opening of vision to something above us or a rising up towards it or a descent of its powers into our being. What we see by the opening of vision is an Infinity above us, an eterntal Presence or an infinite

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[1] Sri Aurobindo; The Life Divine: Chapter XXV.

Existence, an infinity of conciousness, an infinity of bliss—a boundless Self, a boundless Light, a boundless Power, a boundless Ecstasy. It may be that for a long time all that is obtained is the occasional or frequent or constant vision of it and a longing and aspiration, but without anything further, because, although something in the mind, heart or other part of the being has opened to this experience, the lower nature, as a whole is too heavy and obscure as yet for more. But there may be, instead of this first wide awareness from below or subsequently to it, an ascension of the mind to heights above: the nature of these heights we may not know or clearly discern, but some consequence of the ascent is felt: there is often too an awareness of infinite ascension and return but no record of translation of that higher state. This is because it has been superconscient to mind and therefore mind, when it rises into it, is unable at first to retain there its power of conscious discernment and defining experience. But when this power begins to awake and act, when mind becomes by degrees conscious in what was to it superconscient, then there begins a knowledge and experience of superior planes of existence. The experience is in accord with that which is brought to us by the first opening of vision : the mind rises into a higher plane of pure self, silent, tranquil, illimitable; or it rises into regions of light or of felicity, or into planes where it feels an infinite Power or a Divine Presence or experiences the contact of a divine Love or Beauty or the atmosphere of a wider and greater and luminous Knowledge."[1]

Again, Chinnamasta is famous as the Goddese who manifested in the mother of Parasurama. That is why she is called *ṣaṣṭhī,* not only sixth in the ten great Vidyas but also the force behind the sixth *avatāra* of Vishnu. The story goes that at the behest of his irate father Jamadagni who was dispeased with the misdemeanour of his wife Renuka, Parasurama cut with his axe, the head of his mother. Then by the virtue of a boon from his father who was pleased with his unquestioning obedience, Parasurama got back his mother again alive. This manifestation of the Divine Mother is Renuka. She is known as Chinnamasta, as her head was cut off by her illustrious son. She is *ėkavīrā*, the sole warrior, the force that is victorious over all that opposes it.

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[1] Sri Aurobindo : The Life Divine : Chapter XXV.

The Mantra of the Goddess is the seed-sound *hūm.* It is known as *dhėnu bīja.* It is a powerful seed-sound to get mastery over the senses and to annihilate the mind completely. Only when what we call mind is annihilated, we get in touch with the secret principle of mind, the mind of Mind, as the Upanishad calls it.

One effective way of Sadhana is to see the light instead of the object. That is, whatever a person perceives, he should not concentrate on the object of perception, he should concentrate on the Light that makes the object perceivable.[1] Another powerful method is to imagine a constant downpour of lightning from the high skies and submit the whole body, mind and self to it in absolute dedication and surrender.[2]

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[1] दृश्यानशेषानपि वर्जयित्वा दृष्टिं निजां सूक्ष्ममहःस्वरूपाम् ।
निभालयेद्यन्मनसा वरीयान् अन्योऽयमम्बास्मरणस्य मार्गः ॥

[2] तटिज्झरीं कामपि संप्रपश्यन् आकाशतः सर्वतनौ पतन्तीम् ।
मौनेन तिष्ठेद्यमिनां वरिष्ठो यद्येतदम्बास्मरणं प्रशस्तम् ॥

—Vasishtha Ganapati Muni in *pracaṇḍacaṇḍī trisati.*

Then one can say with the Seer-Poet :

> " In his wide sky she built her world anew ;
> She gave to mind's calm pace the motor's speed,
> To thinking a need to live what the soul saw,
> To living an impetus to know and see.
> His splendour grasped her, her puissance to him clung ;
> She crowned the Idea a king in purple robes,
> Put her magic serpent sceptre in Thought's grip,
> Made forms his inward vision's rhythmic shapes
> And her acts the living body of his will.
> A flaming thunder, a creator flash,
> His victor Light rode on her deathless Force :
> A centaur's mighty gallop bore the god.
> Life throned with mind, a double majesty."[1]

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[1] Sri Aurobindo : Savitri : II. 3.

DHUMAVATI

"In the beginning Darkness was hidden by darkness, all this was an ocean of inconscience,"[1] declares the Veda. "In the beginning all this was the Non-Being. It was thence that Being was born"[2]. "Only the Non-Being was this in the beginning. That was the Being, That became"[3]. "Here in the beginning there was nought"[4]. These are the various affirmations of the Upanishads. Out of the Non-Being, Being appeared and the Being dissolves back again into the Non-Being. This primal state before creation is also the ultimate state after the creation is withdrawn; and that becomes the primal state for the next creation. This state, the Tantrics give the great name, Dhumavati. As she represents the first and foremost state before creation, as she is the one in the very beginning, anterior to the age of gods, *devānām pūrvye yuge*[5], she is acclaimed as *jyeṣṭhā*,

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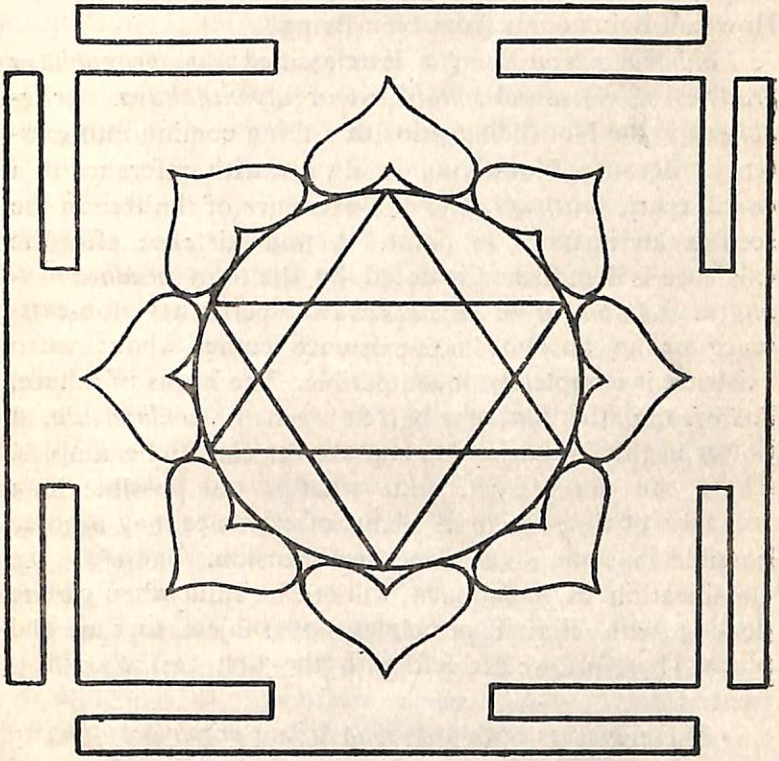
[1] तम आसीत् तमसा गूळ्हमग्रे अप्रकेतं सलिलं सर्वमा इदम् ।
—Rig Veda X, 129. 3.

[2] असद्वा इदमग्र आसीत् । ततो वै सदजायत ।
—Taittiriya Upanishad 2. 7.

[3] असदेवेदमग्र आसीत् । तत् सदासीत् तत् समभवत् ।
—Chandogya Upanishad 3. 19. 1.

[4] नैवेह किञ्चनाग्र आसीत् ।
—Brihadaranyaka Upanishad 1. 1. 2.

[5] देवानां पूर्व्ये युगेऽसतः सदजायत ।
—Rig Veda X, 72. 2.



DHUMAVATI

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the eldest. As she is also the ultimate darkness of Dissolution, she is known as *dhūmra vārāhi,* the smoky swallower of the universes.

Now, what is this *asat*, Non-Being? Is it the Nihil, *śūnya,* the void? Is it *nirvāṇa*, the extinction of existence? How can Being come from Non-Being?

abhāva, Non-Being, is classified as *prāgabhāva pradhvamsābhāva* and *sadābhāva* or *atyantābhāva. prāgabhāva* is the Non-Being prior to a thing coming into existence. Because Non-Being is always with reference to a counterpart, *pratiyogi*. The non-existence of the tree in the seed is an instance in point. A non-existence after the existence is demolished is noted by the term *pradhvamsābhāva. sadābhāva* or *atyantābhāva*, perpetual non-existence or an absolute non-existence comes about when existence is completely incompatible. The horns of a hare, *śaśaviṣāṇa*, the son of a barren woman, *vandhyāsuta*, a flower in the sky *gaganakusuma* are the classical examples. These can never exist. But what is not possible in a measure of time or in a plane of existence may become possible in some other plane or dimension. Therefore the classification as Sadabhava will not be valid when we are dealing with eternal principles not subject to time and place. Therefore we are left with the first two classifications.

Dhumavati is both *prāgabhāva* and *pradhvamsābhāva*, as she represents the Non-Being anterior to Being and also the Non-Being posterior to Being as a result of dissolution, *pralaya*. She is the interregnum of inconscience between successive manifestations. Be it noted that when the tree is non-existent in the seed, it appears to be like that in the seed-form. The potentiality of the tree, the seed holds inside itself. The Non-Being is a non-being only when we are speaking in terms of time. After a time the tree emerges from the seed. The Non-Being is really the Being in its potential form. The Supreme Being has a state of rest, let us say, a quiescent poise, free from all cosmic existence which is nothing but a conscious formulation of itself. This state, for want of a better term, we call Non-Being. When the Supreme binds himself, limits himself, there is creation, the Being; when he is absolutely free, is as himself, there is the Non-Being. That is why the scriptures say that Being was born out of Non–Being. This is possible only when Non-Being holds in its womb the Being to be born. Dhumavati is the primal darkness hidden by darkness; but she is not absolutely dark, the Tantra indicates. She is of smoky hue, *dhūmāvatī*, darkness impregnated with the embryo of light, the smoke carrying hidden in its particles the heat of flame. Thus Being and Non-Being, *sat* and *asat* are different states of the Reality which is constantly asserted by affirmations as well as negations *neti neti*.

In the Veda, Non-Existence, as we have pointed out, is represented as darkness concealed in darkness. It is the Vedic Night, *rātri jagato niveśani*[1] which holds the world and all its unrevealed potentialities in its obscure bosom. It is also represented as the deluge, the great flood that covers all things, the inconscient ocean *apraketam salilam*[2]. The Vedic imagery talks of two oceans one superconscient high above and the other sub-conscient down below. In between, banked by the two oceans is the conscious life of the living beings. It is said that the seers of Truth discovered the building of being in non-being by will in the heart and by the thought *sato bandhum asatim*

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[1] Rig Veda I. 35. 1.

[2] Rig Veda X. 129. 3.

niravindan hṛdi pratīṣyā kavayo manīṣā[1]. In the Tantra, Dhumavati is the dark night, the great night, the terrible night of delusion, *kālarātrir, mahārātrir, moharātriśca dāruṇā.*[2] In the Purana, she is the *nidrā,* sleep of Vishnu. Inconscience is superconscience in sleep. Vishnu, the all-pervading primordial principle gets free from his manifestation at the end of dissolution, spreads his couch of infinity, *ananta,* on the ocean of eternal sweet bliss, *kṣīra samudra* (milky ocean) and withdraws himself in superconscient sleep, *yoganidrā*. This sleep will be a precursor of a greater awakening, this withdrawal will be the harbinger of a newer projection of the Godhead in creation; this rest will prepare the ground for a further energetic action. Dhumavati holds in her womb all the creation and helps the world towards manifestation. She is the base and support of all the unmanifested worlds.

When Being comes out of Non-Being, when creation starts, let us not imagine that creation is full of Being and there is no Non-Being in it. When God created the world, he also entered into it, *tat sṛṣṭvā tadeva anu prāviśat.*[3] He is the material as well as the instrument, *upādāna* and *nimitta.* Both Non-Being and Being of which the Supreme is constituted are found in the creation. In fact, the birth of Being from Non-Being is constantly going on in the creation. We have said that ignorance is a partial knowledge, a result of self-limitation, a product of exclusive concentration of the Supreme on itself. When the Supreme wants to create, it concentrates on its Being, so that it may *become* and ignores its Non-Being. This is the cause of ignorance, inconscience. The Non-Being is depicted as darkness concealed in darkness. With the Non-Being comes the forces of darkness and division, the offsprings of ignorance, falsehood, evil, sin, suffering. Thus, like ignorance these have their roots in inconscience; these are the byproducts in the process of creation.

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[1] Rig Veda X. 129. 4.

[2] Devi Mahatmyam 1.

[3] Taittiriya Upanishad II. 6.

Therefore, the Veda, when it describes the Non-Existence as Night, makes it clear that it is a symbol of our obscure consciousness fumbling and stumbling and so full of evil, *duritam*, sin and suffering. To bring home this fact, the Tantra gives a striking description of Dhumavati, the great Goddess of inconscience. She is the power of perversion, the force of distortion. As such she is depicted as utterly ugly and abominable. Pale in face, long in limbs, sparse in teeth, breasts sagging, decrepit, uncouth, fickle, bad with dirty clothes and dishevelled hair, she bestrides on a cart with a raven for its banner. The widow, with a harsh look in her eyes, has a winnow in her hand; the other hand, she throws up in the act of granting a boon.[1] Corresponding to the Vedic appellation, *duritam* which arises out of wrong consciousness symbolised by evil dream, *duṣvapnyam*, the Tantra calls Dhumavati *duṣṭā*.

It is a general principle in the Tantra that *śakti* always implies a *śakta*. Mahakali has her consort Mahakala, Tara her Akshobhya, Bhairavi her Bhairava. In the cult of Tripurasundari, the *śakti* and the *śakta* are so inseparable that they are considered as the two in one. But Dhumavati is the only *śakti* who is bereft of a *śakta*. She is a widow, *vidhavā*, the Tantra declares. When all is inconscience and non-existence, when the Primordial Purusha is virtually dead in deep sleep, when the force lies involved, coiled up unused, because of the absence of a wielder of force, the Goddess representing the principle of non-existence is called a widow. Only when she plunges into creation, becomes *prakriti,*[1] she has a Purusha, a witness, later a tolerator of her actions once he approves and then a master exercising full control, *sākṣī*, *anumantā* and *īśvara*. So, Dhumavati, the inconscience, the non-existence and Kamalatmika who is consciousness in full play, the patent existence are considered to be the antipodes in the process of cosmic creation.

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[1] विवर्णा चञ्चला दुष्टा दीर्घा च मलिनाम्बरा ।
विमुक्तकुन्तला रूक्षा विधवा विरलद्विजा ॥

काकध्वजरथारूढा विलम्बितपयोधरा ।
शूर्पहस्तातिरूक्षाक्षा धूतहस्तवरान्विता ॥

How is Dhumavati different from Kali and Bhairavi? Bhairavi represents the energy, the heat of Tapas, coiled up, ready for release in action. Dhumavati represents inconscience and inactivity. Kali is the force of transformation in relation to Time; she is the evolving principle in the creation of time and space. Dhumavati is the Non-being before creation; she holds in potentiality the evolving principle.

To quote Sri Aurobindo: "The inconscience is an inverse reproduction of the supreme superconscience; it has the same absoluteness of being and automatic action, but in a vast involved trance; it is being lost in itself, plunged in its own abyss of infinity. Instead of a luminous absorption in self-existence there is a tenebrous involution in it, the darkness veiled within darkness of the Rig Veda, *tama āsīt tamasā gūḍham,* which makes it look like Non-

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[1] प्रकृष्टवाचकः प्रश्च कृतिश्च सृष्टिवाचकः ।
सृष्टौ प्रकृष्टा या देवी प्रकृतिः सा प्रकीर्तिता ॥

Existence; instead of a luminous inherent self-awareness, there is a consciousness plunged into an abyss of self-oblivion, inherent in being but not awake in being. Yet is this involved consciousness still a concealed knowledge by identity; it carries in it the awareness of all the truths of existence hidden in its dark infinite and, when it acts and creates—but it acts first as Energy and not as Consciousness,– everything is arranged with the precision and perfection of an intrinsic knowledge. In all material things reside a mute and involved Real Idea, a substantial and self-effective intuition, an eyeless exact perception, an automatic intelligence working out its unexpressed and unthought conceptions, a blindly seeing sureness of sight, a dumb infallible sureness of suppressed feeling coated in insensibility, which effectuate all that has to be effected. All this state and action of the Inconscient corresponds very evidently with the same state and action of the pure Superconscience, but translated into terms of self-darkness in place of the original self-light. Intrinsic in the material form these powers are not possessed by the form but yet work in its mute subsconscience."[1]

And again, "A spiritual evolution, an evolution of consciousness in Matter in a constant developing self-formation till the form can reveal the indwelling spirit, is then the key-note, the central significant motive of the terrestrial existence. This significance is concealed at the outset by the involution of the spirit, the Divine Reality, in a dense material Inconscience; a veil of Inconscience, a veil of insensibility of Matter hides the universal Consciousness-Force which works within it, so that the Energy which is the first form the Force of creation assumes in the physical universe, appears to be itself inconscient and yet does the work of a vast occult Intelligence. The obscure mysterious creatrix ends indeed by delivering the secret consciousness out of its thick and tenebrous prison; but she delivers it slowly, little by little, in minute infinitesimal drops, in thin jets, in small vibrant concretions of energy and substance, of life, of mind, as if that were all she could get out through the crass obstacle, the dull reluctant medium of an inconscient stuff of existence. At first she houses herself in forms of Matter which appear to be altogether unconscious, then struggles towards mentality in the guise of living Matter and attains to it imperfectly in the conscious animal. This consciousness is at first rudimentary, mostly a half subconscious or just conscious instinct; it develops slowly till in more organised forms of living Matter it reaches its climax of intelligence and exceeds itself in Man, the thinking animal who develops into the reasoning mental being but carries along with him even at his highest elevation the mould of original animality, the dead weight of subconscience of body, the downward pull of gravitation towards the original Inertia and Nescience, the control of an inconscient material Nature over his conscious evolution, its power for limitation, its law of difficult development, its immense force for retardation and frustration. This control by the original Inconscience over the consciousness emerging from it takes the general shape of a mentality struggling towards knowledge but itself, in what seems to be its fundamental nature, an Ignorance."[1]

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[1] Sri Aurobindo: The Life Divine: Book II, Chapter X.

Therefore the prayer rises to lead one from the Non-Being to the Being, from the darkness to the light, from death to immortality.[1] As Being is born out of Non-Being, one method is to see the Being as Non-Being, Non-Existence, that is to think of the Being as though it does not exist. This is the basis of *māyāvāda*, to dismiss the whole creation as an illusion, *māyā* or to consider it as a product of ignorance *avidyā*. There is a distinction between *māyā* and *avidyā*. The illusion of the One being measured out as the Many is *māyā* ; not seeing the One in the Many is *avidyā*. The second method is to get out of suffering, evil and sin rampant in creation by getting into the very source of these things, that is non-existence. There, one plunges into the Nihil, the Void, the extinction of the entire existence. This is the Nirvana of the Buddha, the extinction of the separative consciousness, the extinguishing of the spark of ego in the original Light.

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[1] Sri Aurobindo: The Life Divine: Book II, Chapter XXIII.

The Tantra does not believe in the negation of the world by calling it as an illusion, neither does it advocate an escape from the world by plunging into a Void. It prescribes the worship of Dhumavati, the Mother of Inconscience. The seed-sound used in the Mantra of the Goddess is *dhūm*. One is asked to choose a lonely spot or a dilapidated house devoid of human habitation, still one's mind and the activity of the senses and then contemplate on Dhumavati, the Non-Existence. In this the Tantra only follows the path laid out by the Vedic and Vedantic wisdom.

The purpose of Sadhana is to manifest the Existence concealed in the Non-Existence, the Consciousness hidden in the Inconscience, the bliss, *ānanda*, lying dormant in suffering and pain, the god masked in the costume of evil and sin. "Manifested, he grows in the lap of their crookedness and becomes high, beautiful and glorious" says the Rig Veda.[1] The Upanishad declares that "he who knows That as both in one, the knowledge and the Ignorance, by the Ignorance crosses beyond death and by the knowledge enjoys Immortality"[2]. Also, "he who knows that as both in one, the Birth and the dissolution of Birth, by the dissolution crosses beyond death and by the Birth enjoys Immortality"[3]. The power of Dhumavati is reflected in terrestrial existence as sleep, lassitude, inertness and inactivity. But to the worshipper of Dhumavati, torpor is turned into trance, sleep into Samadhi and lassitude, a state of calm repose. In fact, corresponding to the *mahāpralaya*, the great dissolution, there is a *pralaya* on each day of terrestrial life. Day is followed by night and the waking state is followed by sleep which resembles in many respects death and dissolution. Half of terrestrial life is spent in sleep in which happens a definite fall in general consciousness. The being sinks into subconsciousness and at times loses itself in inconscience. Whatever gain is made in the working state in the level of consciousness, it suffers dimunition in sleep and again an effort has to be made to regain what is lost in sleep and progress forward. This endless struggle is much mitigated by the grace of Dhumavati. Sleep need not be a break in the process of life. Dhumavati makes sleep a period of assimilation of what has been gained in the waking state, a ground for preparing what has yet to be achieved. Sleep becomes luminous and conscious and the continuity of Sadhana is maintained in sleep as well. Also, it is the common experience of Yogis that there are in Sadhana like night and day, alternations of states of darkness and depression and states of light and cheer. At times the periods are prolonged when there is no progress in Sadhana, one feels as though one has come to a dead end. One feels despondent, dejected and depressed. These periods are turned into gestation periods by the grace of Dhumavati. Whatever is achieved in the course of Sadhana is consolidated during this period.

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[1] Brihadaranyaka Upanished : I. 3. 28.

असतो मा सदगमय तमसो मा ज्योतिर्गमय मृत्योर्मा
अमृतं गमय ।

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[1] Rig Veda I. 95.5 (Sri Aurobindo's translation).

[2] Isha Upanishad (Sri Aurobindo's translation).

[3] Ibid.

विद्यां चाविद्यां च यस्तद्वेदोभयं सह ।
अविद्यया मृत्युं तीर्त्वा विद्ययाऽमृतमश्नुते ॥
सम्भूतिं च विनाशं च यस्तद्वेदोभयं सह ।
विनाशेन मृत्यूं तीर्त्वा सम्भूत्याऽमृतमश्नुते ॥

"There in the slumber of the cosmic Will
He saw the secret key of Nature's change"[1]

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[1] Sri Aurobindo : Savitri II, 8.

BAGALAMUKHI

"Impeded by thy resisting power, the loquacious becomes dumb, the lord of the earth becomes a lowly pauper, the fire turns cold, the angry is appeased, the wicked person turns good, the fast trotter limps, the arrogant is humbled, the all-knower becomes an ignoramus, O Bagalamukhi, the eternal auspicious mother, daily our obeisance to thee".[1] Thus the prowess of Bagalamukhi is lauded by the Tantric.

In this land, the pursuit of knowledge has always occupied the prime place in human endeavour. In meetings, assemblies and concourses, one is honoured for the knowledge one possesses. And the possession of knowledge is inferred from its display in public. Votaries of the Goddess Tara have always excelled in their dramatic displays of learning. The tradition has been for the scholars to vie with each other in displaying their feats of learning. This has led to brow-beating, outwitting one another, arguments and counter-arguments *vāda prativāda*. In learned circles, these displays are always welcomed and encouraged as they improve the skill in debating, the power to put across one's point of view and the faculty of clear thinking. Much to the delectation of

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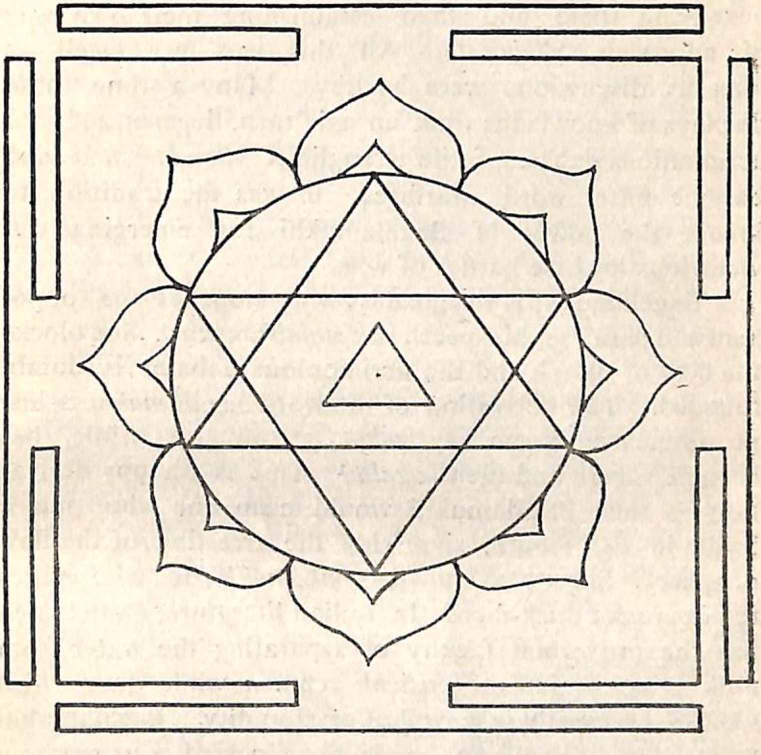
[1] वादी मूकति रङ्कति क्षितिपतिर्वैश्वानरः शीतति
क्रोधी शाम्यति दुर्जनः सुजनति क्षिप्रानुगः खञ्जति ।

गर्वी खर्वति सर्वविच्च जडति त्वद्यन्त्रणायन्त्रितः
श्रीनित्ये बगलामुखि प्रतिदिनं कल्याणि तुभ्यं नमः ॥



BAGALAMUKHI

the old scholars, philosophical treatises were written in a style suggesting that they could as well be enacted as lively discussions in learned assemblies with their way of presenting all possible refutations *pūrvapakṣa* to their theories, answering them and then establishing their own way of approach, *siddhānta.* All this was very well as long as discussions were healthy. Many a time these displays of knowledge took an ugly turn, degenerated into acrimonious debates, futile wranglings *vitandā vāda* and became bitter wordy warfares. It was the tradition to invoke the power of Bagalamukhi for emerging out victorious in these battles of wits.

Bagalamukhi is the goddess who stupefies the opponent and paralyses his speech *vāk stambhanakari.* She blocks the flow of speech and the acrimonious debater is dumbfounded. The derivation of the word *bagalāmukhi* is lost in obscurity. Some say *valgā,* meaning a bridle, has become *vagalā* and then *bagalā.*[1] This is a happy derivation as then Bagalamukhi would mean one who puts a bridle in the mouth, signifying the arresting of the flow of speech. She is also known as *bakamukhi*, one who makes the opponent duck-faced. In Indian literature, swan which has the proverbial faculty of separating the water from milk is a symbol of critical acumen while duck which quacks incessantly is a symbol of stupidity. Bagalamukhi makes the swan of an opponent a duck. Let us see how the goddess is described in the Tantra. She is clad in yellow and has two hands. With her left hand she catches hold of the opponent's tongue and strikes him with a mace held in her right hand.[1] She is the striking force, the paralysing power, the stupefying Shakti.

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[1] Such juxtapositions of letters are not uncommon :

viz. *himsa, simha ; pas'yaka, kas'yapa.*

Her Mantra is made up of the single seed-sound *hlrīm*. She has to be thought in contemplation as all yellow. Her complexion is yellow, her garment is yellow, her ornaments, garlands are all yellow in colour, *pītāmbarābharaṇa mālya vibhūṣitāngī*. The worshipper of Bagalamukhi is asked to be clad in yellow and perform the japa of the Mantra with the help of beads made out of turmeric.[2] What is the significance of the colour yellow and why is it associated with Bagalamukhi and her worship? The Veda talks of golden light *hiraṇya varṇa* of the Supreme Truth *sat* or *satya*. When the Supreme who is *sat cit ānanda* descends down in creation he becomes the triple universe of physical, vital, mental, *annam, prāna* and *manas*. *sat*, we have indicated in an earlier chapter, limits itself in creation as the mind, *manas*. The golden colour appears in creation in its stifled form of yellow which is the colour of the thinking mind, in occult tradition. It is the thinking mind in man that arrests the downpour of intuition, inspiration and other higher faculties, now appearing to be beyond the reach of man. It is the drab thinking mind that mitigates the intensities of higher intimations and keeps the man dwarfed before his high aspiration. The golden hue, suppressing its glow becomes yellow. Yellow in turn deadens the glow of other colours. It is common knowledge that yellow is mixed with other colours to mitigate their bright effects. And the Sanskrit term for yellow, *pīta*, is significant—the colour which has drunk *pīta*, sapped the effect of others. Thus there is every reason for associating yellow with Bagalamukhi. Not only with Bagalamukhi, in all occult acts of *stambhana*, stoppage, the Tantra prescribes the use of yellow colour. For instance in the worship of Sri Chakra, the occult form-pattern of Tripura Sundari, when a person wants to stop all arguments of the opponents, for paralysing their speech, the *jnānārṇava* Tantra prescribes the drawing of Sri Chakra with yellow materials and the worshipping of it with yellow flowers.[1]

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[1] जिह्वाग्रमादाय करेण देवीं वामेन शत्रून् परिपीडयन्तीम् ।
गदाभिघातेन च दक्षिणेन पीताम्बराढ्यां द्विभुजां नमामि ॥

[2] पीताम्बरधरो भूत्वा पूर्वाशाभिमुखास्थितः ।
लक्षमेकं जपेन्मन्त्रं हरिद्राग्रन्थिमालया ॥

Yes, Bagalmukhi has close connection with the Sri Vidya tradition. She corresponds to Dandanatha, the Commander of Armed Forces of Rajarajeshwari. She is the striking force of the Mother, stifling all movement and activity. She induces sudden immobility in action. While Dhumavati is the immobile inconscient, Bagalamukhi is the immobile consciousness. Then what is the difference between her and Tripura Bhairavi? Tirupura-Bhairavi is consciousness concentrated in immobility at the very outset of an action. Bagalamukhi is the suppression of action after it has begun. It is an intermediate immobility between two stages of action. Bagalamukhi restrains the speech of the opponent, not for ever. She restrains it at the crucial moment and allows her victim free flow of speech when it is of no consequence. Bagalamukhi paralyses speech. She is also the universal paralysing power *sarva stambhanakarī* because the Word alone gave birth to all these worlds *vāgeva viśvā bhuvanāni jajñe*. Word signifies expression and so the outward manifestation. Bagalamukhi is the power that arrests the movement of manifestation in its course. She throttles the free flow of expression; she stuns and stupefies the progressing force; she paralyses the puissant action.

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[1] पीतद्रव्यैः समालिख्य पीतपुष्पैः समर्चयेत् ।
पूर्वाशाभिमुखो भूत्वा स्तम्भयेत् सर्ववादिनः ॥

What is the significance of Bagalamukhi in cosmic play? What is achieved by this sudden stoppage of movement? When a movement of activity is suppressed, the pressure increases the force of activity. In fact, the activity is sustained and the momentum of movement maintained by alternate currents of status and dynamis. "For all energy, all kinetic action has to support itself on status or by status if it is to be effective or creative; otherwise there will be no solidity of anything created, only a constant whirl without any formation; status of being, form of being are necessary to kinesis of being. Even if energy be the primal reality, as it seems to be in the material world, still it has to create status of itself, lasting forms, duration of beings in order to have a support for its action: the status may be temporary, it may be only a balance or equilibrium of substance created and maintained by a constant kinesis, but while it endures it is real and after it ceases, we still regard it as something that was real. The principle of a supporting status for action is a permanent principle, and its action is constant in Time-eternity. When we discover the stable Reality underlying all this movement of energy and this creation of forms, we do indeed perceive that the status of created forms is only temporary; there is a stability of repetition of the kinesis in a same persistent action and figure of movement which maintains substance of being in stable form of itself; but this stability is created and the one permanent and self-existent status is that of the eternal Being whose Energy erected the forms." [1]

When, for example, a rushing current of water is stemmed, two things may happen. The water, suddenly stopped, whirls and eddies gathering great momentum or it changes its course and flows swiftly into new channels. This is the action of Bagalamukhi, the stunning force in universal nature. In fact this is the principle on which the whole edifice of Hatha Yoga and Raja Yoga is raised. As is well-known, Asanas and Pranayama play the key roles in Hatha Yoga. By Asana, we mean various postures of the physical body, various attitudes of immobility to which the body is trained to be habituated. The physical being of man appears to be dense, inert and obscure. But it is capable of hard work, powerful action and great endurance. As the solid basis of *prāṇa* the life-energy, it is a store-house of power, the primary instrument of acting according to one's law of being *ādyam dharma sādhanam.* It is the material envelope of the Spirit, the crucible in which the evolving psychic being is processed. The bodily energy is spilt and scattered in a thousand and one movements. The purpose of Asana is to induce stillness and immobility in certain postures of the body and prolong this state as far as possible. By constant exercise of stilling the movement and gathering the energy that is normally thrown out, the body becomes supple and loses its rigidity. The very nature of Shape or Form is its set formation, its rigid outline. The body which gives shape and form to the Soul which is shapeless and formless has to be cast in a set pattern. The aim of Asana is to give a certain flexibility to the rigid set-up of the physical body by the alternate arresting and releasing of the movement expressed by it. By this process the body gets the power to resist and throw off disease, decay and the early symptoms of the setting in of death. Pranayama, as the name implies, devolves round the principle of the extension *āyāma* of the pranic energy in the body. The *prāṇa* or life-energy is not normally fully used up by the body. The coursing of Prana has to be extended ; it has to course through all the *nāḍīs* or nerve channels of the system. By this, mastery is obtained over the whole nervous system, over the vital and the emotive faculties. The Hathayogin unlocks the secrets of the pranic energy that governs his vital being with the key of the outward movement of respiration. By regulation of inhalation and exhalation, the breath is extended and by that means the flow of pranic energy. How is this extension brought about? By arresting the flow of breath for a while. This arrestation, stoppage of breath is the device adopted to give more force and push to the pranic energy each time it is released after a stoppage so that it may course through all the *nāḍīs*. Thus, Pranayama consists of the three acts, *pūraka*, inhalation, *kumbhaka,* retention and *recaka*, exhalation. One can suspend breathing also. That is, after fully exhaling, one suspends inhalation for a time. The breath, instead of being retained within the body is being retained outside. This is known as *bāhya kumbhaka*. By mastering this device a Hathayogin is able to lock himself in an airless space and continue to live for any length of time.

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[1] Sri Aurobindo: The Life Divine: Book II Chapter VI.

In Rajayoga, Asanas and Pranayama occupy a subordinate position, the prime of place being given to the mind and its functions. Patanjali defined yoga as the stilling of the activities of the mind, *yogaḥ cittavṛtti nirodhaḥ*. Rajayoga stresses on preliminary purification by prescribing five *yamas* restraints and five *niyamas* disciplines such as abstinence from uttering falsehood, from injury or killing, from stealing etc. Then mental activities are stilled, the consummation being the mind losing itself in communion with the Divine, *samādhi*. It is normally supposed that thinking improves the mind and incessant activity of the mind indicates the proper functioning of the mind. On the other hand, mind vastly improves by interspersed periods of stillness amidst activities. Most of us believe that our mind is the originator of all the beautiful thoughts we are proud of. Mostly thoughts come from outside; mind is only a receiving and transmitting instrument. Just as in Pranayama, there is a mental *pūraka* and *recaka*, inhalation and exhalation. As the thoughts come into the mind, one should still their activity, practise a mental *kumbhaka*. This is one method. The more effective and summary method will be to practise the *bāhya kumbhaka,* still the thought-waves outside, before they enter the mind. Just as breath is held outside, without any inhalation, or exhalation mind is kept empty of all thoughts by holding them outside, by neither taking them into nor transmitting them from the mind.

Thus the Tantra declares that one experiences the play of the Goddess Bagalamukhi by practising Hathayoga and Rajayoga. The method of sadhana is to sit in a convenient posture, *āsana*, still the mental activities, practise *kumbhaka* and concentrate on the seed-sound *hlrīm*.[1] The sadhaka attains Siddhis like *aṇimā* etc. and gets absolute control and absolute mastery over the elements. He can stop an impending rain, walk on fire by suspending the burning quality of fire, remain under water for any length of time etc. In all these acts of *stambhana,* stoppage, the intention is to suspend temporarily the activities of Nature, not to annul its laws. When clouds hang heavily in the sky and it is threatening to rain, if the rain is averted by Yogic means, after the intended period is over it comes down in torrents, with greater force.

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[1] आसनबन्धादचलो भूत्वा रुद्धप्राणो बगलां भजते ।

—Vasishtha Ganapati Muni in *umāsahasram*.

We said that when a movement is arrested, it may change its course and flow through other channels. One worships the great Goddess, the paralysing power of the cosmic forces, Bagalamukhi to alter the course of one's destiny. Destiny indicates the ultimate destination, no doubt. But the ways of arriving at the destiny need not be predetermined. The ultimate destiny of all created beings is to attain oneness with the creator, from whom they are not different. This ultimate destiny is decreed. Whether this happens in a single birth or in myriad births depends upon the evolving soul. And in the process there is freedom to choose the course of action. But how to exercise this freewill so that one may arrive at the destination by the shortest route possible? One's will should not be contrary to the will of the creator in the scheme of things. "May thy Will be done, O Lord, may thy Will prevail" should be the constant prayer. The method is to hold back. For example when under an impulse a person wants to speak, if he learns to hold back his speech for a while and then speak, the resultant action will be entirely different. This holding back, this sidestepping, one achieves by the grace of Bagalamukhi. In the mids of hectic activity one learns to pause and step aside in the recess of repose, in the midst of speech one habituates oneself to hold back and sink in silence, in the midst of pain and suffering one learns to withdraw and glide into the gladness within oneself. Then a person is able to get in touch with his true being, know what the Divine has intended for him and allow the Divine's Will act through him.

> " They follow the unseen leader in the heart,
> Their lives obey the inner nature's law.
> There is kept grandeur's store, the hero's mould:
> The soul is the watchful builder of its fate.[1] "

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[1] **Sri Aurobindo: Savitri II. 6.**

MATANGI

The primordial throb *ādya spanda* which originates by the self-volition of the Transcendent Absolute, starts a series of vibrations that take the form of sound *nāda*. This is the word, the Word Eternal *nityā vāk* of the Veda which itself became all the worlds, *vāgeva viśvā bhuvanāni jajñe.* Vak is the creatrix descending with her four cosmic steps in manifestation. The Veda says that all speech is measured out in four steps or planes and these are known to the knowers of Brahman, impelled by the mind. The three are hidden in the secrecy while the fourth step is the human speech that is the ordinary word.[1] What are these steps? The step that is visible and palpable to us is the gross, *sthūla,* the physical substance of matter. Sustaining and circumfusing it is the subtle *sūkṣma,* the vital life-force. Supporting and cherishing it is the causal *kāraṇa,* the mind-principle. The basis of all these three is the great causal, *mahākāraṇa*, the High Supernal where abides the Word with all the original rhythms. These steps correspond to the four states of consciousness: *jāgrat,* the waking consciousness operating in the world of matter; *svapna*, the dream-state having its play in the field of the life-forces; *suṣupti,* deep sleep having its sway over the divine illumined mind-principle and *turiya,* the fourth that transcends these three states of consciousness. "The Tantriks while admitting the principle of the division, apply it for practical purposes, dealing with the subject from a psycho-physical and psycho-spiritual point of view;

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[1] Rig Veda I, 164. 45.

naturally therefore, since the subtle centres play a vital part in their Yoga they locate the Vak of the states in the nervous system. They name it *parā, paśyanti, madhyamā* and *vaikhari.* The first and the supreme source—the primordial *parā vāk* is beyond ; it is unmanifest, but turned towards manifestation ; it is the great causal *mahā-kāraṇa*. and as such its centre is at the bottom of the spinal column that supports the nervous system. This bottom is *mulādhāra,* the root-centre of the physical being. Next is the *paśyanti vāk*, the word that perceives, and this is the causal located in the navel centre ; then is the *madhyamā vāk,* the middle, the word in the intermediate subtle region between the navel and throat which last is the region for the express speech called *vaikharī vāk.*"[1]

This *vaikharī vāk,* the Word expressed as speech, the Tantrics acclaim as the ninth in the Dasa Maha Vidyas, the great Goddess *mātangi.* As Sri Aurobindo says : " The words which we use in our speech seem to be, if we look only at their external formation, mere physical sounds which a device of the mind has made to represent certain objects and ideas and perceptions,—a machinery nervous perhaps in origin, but developed for a constantly finer and more intricate use by the growing intelligence ; but if we look at them in their inmost psychological and not solely at their more external aspect, we shall see that what constitutes speech and gives in its life and appeal and significance is a subtle conscious force which informs and is the soul of the body of sound : it is a superconscient Nature-Force raising its material out of our subconscience, but growingly conscious in its operations in the human

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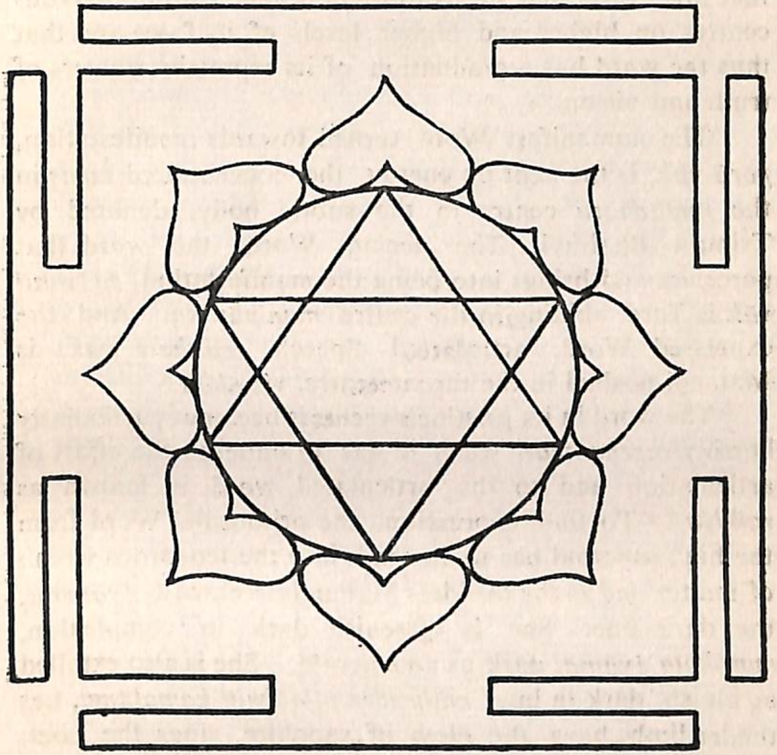
[1] Sri Kapali Sastriar : " The Vak of the Veda and the Throb of the Tantra " in Lights on the Ancients.



MATANGI

mind that develops itself in one fundamental way and yet variously in language. It is this Force, this Shakti to which the old Vedic thinkers gave the name of Vak, the goddess of creative Speech, and the Tantric psychists supposed that this Power acts in us through different subtle nervous centres on higher and higher levels of its force and that thus the word has a graduation of its expressive powers of truth and vision."[1]

The unmanifest Word turned towards manifestation, *parā vāk,* is the pent up energy, the concentrated *tapas* in the *mulādhāra* centre in the subtle body, denoted by Tripura Bhairavi. The seeing Word, the word that perceives and brings into being the manifestation, *paśyanti vāk* is Tara, abiding in the centre *maṇipūraka*. And the expressed Word, articulated Speech, *vaikhari vāk,* is Matangi posited in the throat-centre, *viśuddhī*.[2]

The word in its pristine sweetness becomes particularly harsh *viśeṣeṇa khara* when it has to undergo the effort of articulation and so the articulated word is known as *vaikhari*. To find expression, the primordial Word from the high supernal has to descend into the tenebrous womb of matter and so the Goddess Matangi is known as *śyāmalā*, the dark one. She is greenish dark in complexion, *marakata śyāmā*, dark as an emerald. She is also extolled as bluish dark in hue; *māhendra nīla dyuti komalāngi*, her tender limbs have the glow of sapphire, sings the poet. The Tantra does not stop with calling the goddess dark. It accosts her as *cāṇḍāli* and that too as *ucchiṣṭa cāṇḍāli*.

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[1] Sri Aurobindo: The Future Poetry.

[2] भवति परा वाग्भेरव्याख्या पश्यन्ती सा कथिता तारा ।
रसनिधिमाप्ता जिह्वारङ्गं मातङ्गीति प्रथिता सेयम् ।।
—Vasishtha Ganapati Muni in *umāsahasram*.

In the Mahabharata is mentioned the story of a sage Matanga who was a Chandala by birth, but aspired for Brahminhood and prayed to Indra. The goddess of expressed speech manifested herself as the daughter of the sage Matanga and thus got her name *mātangi-matanga muni kanyakā*.[1] As the goddess took birth as the daughter of a Chandala she became a Chandali. This is a satisfactory explanation of the appellation of the goddess, no doubt. But there is bound to be in this, something more than that meets the eye. Because the Tantra Shastra is justly famous for its picturesque speech, for its occult and symbolic nomenclature. Following the way of the Veda, the Tantra employs an outward common place object or word for clothing the inner significance, presses into service popular anecdotes for symbolising profound truths. The intention is that those who have the vision will see through, *cakṣuṣmanto' nu paśyanti*; the others who are not yet fit to enter the precincts of knowledge will remain happy at the periphery.

mati is the thinking mind and *mata* is thought or idea. Matanga means that which goes to the thought *matam gacchati iti.* The unmanifest Word perceives itself for manifestation and then reaches the thinking mind for expression. This stage of the word is *matanga*. When the word fashioned by the heart and formulated by the mind is expressed, articulated, it is *mātangi*. From the mighty height of *paramam vyoma,* the Word in the course of expression descends to the lowest physical level of articulation. The great radiance which transcends all colour schemes becomes coloured when it descends for manifestation. The Word of pristine purity becomes coloured during expression. The Sanskrit term *varṇa* which means colour is the term for caste, is the term for the letters of alphabet. The speech, the articulated word which is raised as an edifice of alphabets, the lowest level in the involution of Vak is picturesquely described as *antya varṇa*, the lowest caste. Thus the Word which is cast out is called the last caste, Chandali.

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[1] Shyamala dandakam.

What is then the significance of the term Ucchishta? Here we can do no better than quote the luminous words of Sri Kapali Sastriar: "The Atharva Veda contains a short section of verses in which the Abode of the Supreme Being from which creation proceeds is named with great significance. It is an irony that the term it employs to denote the Supreme Source and mainstay of all creation has come to mean in later Sanskrit 'leavings of food' *ucchiṣṭa*. In the Vedic text, it is used in the sense of 'The Residual above', *ut-śiṣṭa*. Obviously it is so termed because any number of creations cannot diminish the infinitude of the Supreme Being that for ever *remains* above the creation which descends from it. When the supreme Force, Shakti, of the Infinite Being above deploys certain energies for the creation of the worlds, He remains still inexhaustible and rests there forming the foundation above, *upari budhna*, for the creation in its downward course[1]."

Thus the word when expressed does not exhaust itself. There is a vast inexhaustible ocean *maho arṇah* of the Word high above from which a thousand streams downward flow as articulated speech.[2] By catching this tail-end of articulated speech, one can get at the very source of speech.

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[1] New Lights in "Sri Aurobindo: Lights on the Teachings."

[2] This is what is meant by the popular adage that knowledge is the only wealth that does not diminish by giving away.

If the gross is studied properly, it will lead to the subtle, the more subtle and ultimately to the great causal. The worship of Matangi leads one to the realisation of the Residual Above. This is the import of the profound appellation *ucchiṣṭa cāṇḍāli.*

The term 'Ucchishta Chandali' calls to the discerning mind a similar term famous in the Mantric lore 'Ucchishta Ganapati'. Is there any connection between the ways of worship of Ganapati and Matangi?

The Word in the Veda is denoted by the term Brahman. This became in the Upanishads the term to denote the Ultimate, the Supreme Creative Godhead. Later on in the Puranas, the term became Brahma, the first of the Trinity, in charge of creation. In the Veda, the creator of the Word is Brahmanaspati. He is also accosted as Brihaspati, the master of the creative Word, "the stress in this name falling upon the potency of the Word rather than upon the thought of the general soul-power which is behind it. Brihaspati gives the Word of knowledge, the rhythm of expression of the superconscient, to the gods and especially to Indra, the Lord of Mind, when they work in man as 'Aryan' powers for the great consummation."[1] He is one of the Angiras Rishis, at times their leader, breaking with the potency of his Word the rocks of inconscience and releasing from there the waters of divine knowledge. It can be easily seen how the Puranas absorbed this concept in their system and made Brihaspati the teacher of the gods, the Prime Minister of Indra. But what cannot be easily inferred is Brahmanaspati of the Veda continues in the Tantra, with a change of name, as Ganapati the foremost of the gods to be worshipped. The proof conclusive is the Mantra in use to invoke the God Ganapati before beginning any worship, which is the same Rik pronounced by the Vedic Seer Gritsamada of yore to call the Godhead Brahmanaspati. "O Brahmanaspati, the superb lord of the Words superb, we call thee, the master of the hosts superb, the superb poet-seer of poet-seers, one of excellent hearing, the luminous foremost; hearing us enter with thy protections and increases (our) abode".[1] In this Rik Brahmanaspati is identified with the master of the hosts superb *gaṇānām gaṇapati*. In fact, in the Veda, it is the master of the hosts of Angiras Rishis, their leader. The Tantra calls the godhead, borrowing the Vedic name, Ganapati. He is *vināyaka*, the special leader, *dvaimātura*, having two mothers (earth and heaven in the Veda). He is the breaker of barriers, having mastery over them, *vighneśvara, vighnarāja*, corresponding to his function in the Veda of shattering the rocks of inconscience with his luminous cry and winning the sources of knowledge. It has to be borne in mind that the Tantra, while taking the concept from the Veda, clothes it in its own imagery. Ganapati is depicted as a god with an elephant's head. If we study the common Sanskrit terms used to denote the elephant and its species, we find that they are connected with the concept of Brahmanaspati. For example, *airāvata*, Indra's elephant, is the offspring of *irāvān*, possessor of *irā* or *ilā*.[2]

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[1] Sri Aurobindo: On the Veda.

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[1] गणानां त्वा गणपतिं हवामहे कवि कवीनामुपमश्रवस्तमम् ।
ज्येष्ठराजं ब्रह्मणां ब्रह्मणस्पत आनः शृण्वन्नूतिभिः सीद
सादनम् ॥
—R.V. II. 23. 1.

[2] *l* is usually substituted for *r* रळयोरभेदः

And Ila is the Vedic goddess representing intuition. *sāmaja* which means an elephant is used in the Veda as an attribute to Brahmanaspati, one who is born of the rhythmic word *sāma*. Again, there is the word *hasti*,[1] one who has the *hasta*, hand denoting skill in action in the case of Brahmanaspati and the trunk in the case of an elephant. And the elephant is noted for its sagacity, for its thinking power and memory. The words *matanga, mātanga, matangaja* (attaining what is thought) are well known synonyms for the elephant. Thus we see that Ganapati and Matangi denote the same concept that is expressed by the Vedic Brahmanaspati. And Ganapati, as the Word, is fourfold. As *parā vāk*, he is seated in the *mulādhāra* centre: his elephant face is in the form of Omkara, the Word that perceives what is to be created *paśyantī vāk*; as *vaikharī vāk*, he is *ucchiṣṭa gaṇapati*, the word with the Residual Above. In Sadhana, one should understand that Matangi is the female counterpart of Ganapati.

Corresponding to Brihaspati being the Minister to the God Indra, Matangi is worshipped as the Minister to the great Goddess Lalita, Rajarajeshwari. She is Mantrini, the Counsellor to Her Imperial Majesty *parā bhaṭṭārikā* and shares her regal power and splendour. So, she is called Rajamatangi, Rajashyamala. The Srividya tradition attaches much importance to her worship. Her favour leads the aspirant to the august presence of Lalita Tripurasundari. As counsellor to Lalita, as Mantrini, immense are her powers and there is nothing which she does not control. Hence she is acclaimed as *sarva vaśankarī*.

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[1] आ तू न इन्द्र क्षुमन्तं चित्रं ग्राभं संगृभाय ।
महाहस्ती दक्षिणेन ।।

--- R.V. VIII. 81. 1.

Her Mantra is mainly made up of the seed-sound *aim* and the accostations, *ucchiṣṭa cāṇḍāli, mātangi, sarvavaśankarī*.

Vagvadini and Nakuli are her personalities. " Speak, speak, *vada, vada,* O Vagvadini" exhorts the aspirant with the Mantra. She is the goddess who gives the *vāgvilāsa* the fluency and felicity in speech. While Bagalamukhi is the stifling Shakti, Vagvadini is the Power as Expression. Nakuli is described as the thunderous Word covered by the lips and encircled by the teeth. Sovereign of all speech, she confers charm and finish on one's expression.[1] Kula in the Tantra represents the base-centre *mūlādhāra* where is dissolved the earth element *ku (pṛthvī tattvam) asmin līyate iti kulam*. As the seat of fire of aspiration ever burning at the root of all, it is *kulakuṇḍa*. The coiled up energy that lies dormant there is the mystic serpent *kula kuṇḍalini* and the path it traverses from *mūlādhāra* centre to the *sahasradala* centre at the top, the whole of the Sushumna channel is known as *kula mārga*, the path of *kula*. The Word traverses this path *kula* as Para Pashyanti and Madhyama before finding itself as the formulated articulated word. It is known as *vāgvajra,* the thunder-speech as it is born along with the lightning perception. When this word comes to the mouth and is uttered it is no longer in the *kula*, it is *nakula* and so Nakuli is the name of the Goddess of articulated expression, *vaikhari*.[2]

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[1] ओष्ठापिधाना नकुली दन्तैः परिवृता पविः ।
सर्वस्यै वाच ईशाना चारु मामिह वादयेत् ।।

[2] The profound imports lay lightly on Tantric words. This is because of ordinary terms used and familiar analogies employed. The unexpressed word is the potential power, *kundalini* serpent; the expressed word is its opposite, *nakula*, mangoose.

The Sushumna channel is encased in the human body by the backbone which is picturesquely described in the Tantra as *veeṇā daṇḍa*, the stem of the musical instrument Veena while the network of the nerves is compared to the strings. So at times Matangi is contemplated as having a Veena in her hand. Her deft fingers move swiftly on the strings enthralling the whole being in the divine melody. She is the Mother of Music, *sangīta mātṛkā*, the harbinger of harmonies opening the occult ear to the inaudible cadences. In the being of the aspirant who takes refuge in her there is no discord, no disharmony. He becomes a joyous instrument in the hands of the Divine Player.

Matangi is lauded as *keera karā*, having the parrot in her hand. What is the significance of the parrot ? All birds, like all animals, make sound : they chirp, twitter, warble etc. They do not speak. Only in the human being the sound can be expressed in the ordered form of speech. But a parrot can be trained to imitate human speech. At any rate, the parrot has not got a developed sense like that of man ; even so, the sound that emanates from its bill can evolve into something like human speech without the employment of any of its known faculties. It is appropriate that the Goddess Matangi who is the ultimate expression of the Para Vak is depicted as playfully donning a parrot in her hand.[1] It is to indicate that it is also possible for human beings to express in speech the highest intuitions without the employment of any of their known mental faculties. In fact the worshipper of Matangi is assured of such accomplishment. Accomplished writers, skilful orators, inspired poets, marvellous musicians have always a universal appeal because they are all the myriad rays of the effulgent Matangi in manifestation.

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[1] "The Mantra not only invokes the Presence of the Deity in a subtle way, but there are at times unmistakable physical effects of that Presence. When Sri Kapali Sastriar was doing the *upāsana*, prescribed adoration of Sri Matangi, the Divine Mother presiding over the harmonies of speech parrots would fly in and settle on his arms. And it did not really surprise him for Matangi is lauded in the Scripture as holding the parrot in her hands, *keera-hasta*".

—M.P. Pandit in 'Life Behind Life'

In the *upāsana* of Matangi, one should not be content with doing the japa of the Mantra or contemplating on her form as prescribed in the Tantra. One should be actively expressing oneself so as to afford a field for Matangi's manifestation. The person interested in music, while seeking her favour, should be assiduously practising his music lessons. He who aspires to become a writer should be engaged in writing. All those who take up the Sadhana of this *mahāvidyā* should be constantly engaged in self-expression as a part of their Sadhana. Then

"Attention to an unseen Truth they seize
A sound as of invisible augur wings
Voices of an unplumbed significance,
Mutterings that brood in the core of Matter's sleep.
In the heart's profound audition they can catch
The murmurs lost by life's uncaring ear,
A prophet speech in thought's omniscient trance".[1]

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[1] Sri Aurobindo: Savitri I. 4.

KAMALATMIKA

Kamalatmika or simply Kamala is the last of the Dasha Maha Vidyas. This deity has a close connection, almost an identity with the other deity exalted as the third of the Dasha Maha Vidyas, Tripurasundari. The knowledge leading to Kamalatmika is also known as *śrīvidyā* and the crowning *bījākṣara* in the sacred sixteen-lettered Mantra of Sundari is the seed-sound of Kamala, *śrim.* The consort of Sundari is Shiva Kameshwara, the auspicious Lord of Love while the consort of Kamala is Vishnu, the all pervasive principle of preservation.

As per the later Puranic idealogies and polemics, can we say that Shiva and Vishnu represent two opposing principles, destruction and preservation—atleast two different schools of thought? But if we look closely, we find an intimate connection, almost an identity between these two deities. The words *hara* and *hari* are derived from the same root *hṛ*, only the terminations are different. In the Veda especially, these two deities represent the co-ordinating principles so essential for an ordered creation. "Rudra is a fierce and violent godhead with a beneficent aspect which approaches the supreme blissful reality of Vishnu. Vishnu's constant friendliness to man and his helping gods is shadowed by an aspect of formidable violence—' like a terrible lion ranging in evil and difficult places '—which is spoken of in terms more ordinarily appropriate to Rudra. Rudra is the father of the vehemently-battling Maruts; Vishnu is hymned in the last Sukta of the fifth Mandala under the name of *evayā marut* as the source from which they sprang, that which they become, and himself identical with the unity and totality of their embattled forces. Rudra is the Deva or Deity ascending in the cosmos, Vishnu, the same Deva or Deity helping and evoking the powers of the ascent."[1]

The benign side of Rudra is that after breaking all defective formations, he heals all wounds and all sufferings with the balm of love. He is Shiva Kameshwara, the auspicious master of Love. We have said that Sundari represents the prime digit of desire of the Supreme, *kāmakalā*, which is the basis of Love, the vivifying bond that ties the creator and the created and which expresses as an outflowing of Bliss and Beauty, the essential consciousness, *cit*, the basic sap of sustenance *rasa* in all things. As the Shakti of Kameshwara, she is Kamakala, Kameshwari, Sundari, Beauty incarnate. She is Tripurasundari, the Beauty in the triad, in the triple words of *sat-ciiānanda, annam, prāṇa* and *manas* in all the things that are threefold. But who makes them threefold ? It is the vast pervasive Vishnu who has taken three strides *idam viṣṇur vicakrame tredhā nidadhe padam*[2] and in the space has established all the worlds. For the action of Rudra's force Vishnu supplies space, the necessary field for operation. Shiva's force, Tripurasundari, is the Beauty immanent in and transcending the triad ; but it is Vishnu's force Kamala who provides the necessary field for the expression of Beauty and Bliss in the universe. The immanent consciousness in all things, the indwelling beauty in each substance and in each form is Sundari. The manifestation of the consciousness, the beauty revealed in all its glory, the exquisite charm expressed is Kamala. Bagala stops

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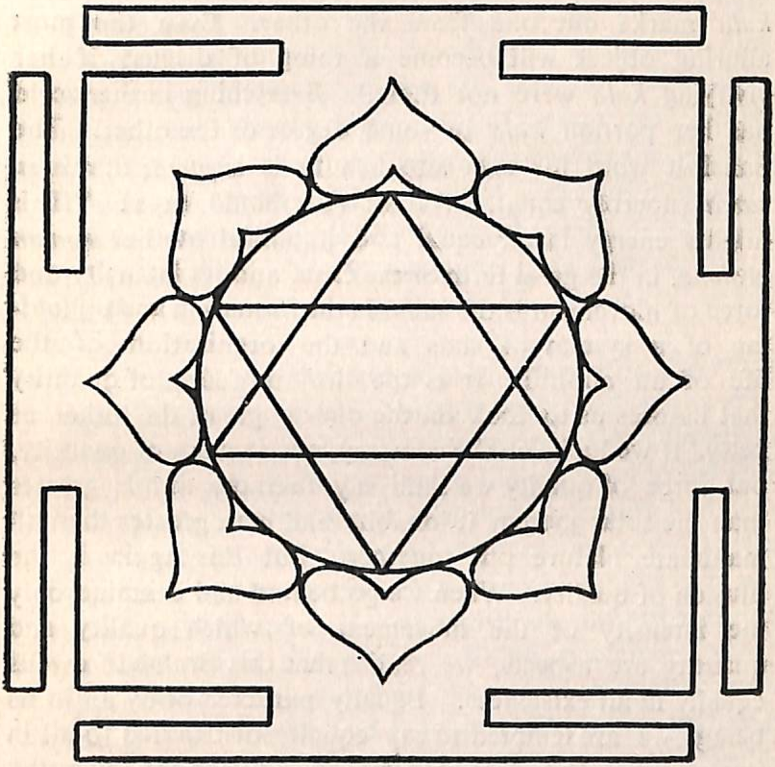
[1] Sri Aurobindo: On the Veda.

[2] Rig.Veda I. 22. 17.



KAMALATMIKA

and stifles while Kamala sets in motion and manifests. As the consort of Vishnu, the all pervasive godhead, she is Lakshmi, the divine mark *lakṣma*, impressed on all the things in the cosmos and the degree of whose presence *kalā* marks out one from the other. Even the most alluring object will become a thing of disgust if her vivifying *kalā* were not there.[1] Everything in the world has her portion *kalā* in some degree or the other. The Sanskrit word for exquisite beauty is *suṣamā*, that is *su sama* superbly equal. As Sri Aurobindo says: "This mighty energy is an equal and impartial mother *samam brahma*, in the great term of the Gita, and its intensity and force of movement is the same in the formation and upholding of a system of suns and the orgnisation of the life of an ant-hill. It is the illusion of size, of quantity that induces us to look on the one as great, the other as petty. If we look, on the contrary, not at mass of quantity, but force of quality we shall say that the ant is greater than the solar system it inhabits and man greater than all inanimate Nature put together. But this again is the illusion of quality. When we go behind and examine only the intensity of the movement of which quality and quantity are aspects, we realise that this Brahman dwells equally in all existences. Equally partaken of by all in its being, we are tempted to say equally distributed to all in its energy. But this too is an illusion of quantity. Brahman dwells in all, indivisible, yet as if divided and distributed. If we look again with an observing perception not dominated by intellectual concepts, but informed by intuition and culminating in knowledge by identity we shall see that the consciousness of this infinite Energy is other than our mental consciousness, that it is indivisible and gives, not an equal part of itself, but its whole self at one and the same time to the solar system and the ant-hill. To Brahman there are no whole or parts but each thing is all itself and benefits by the whole of Brahman. Quality and quantity differ but the self is equal. The form and manner and result of the force of action vary infinitely, but the eternal, primal, infinite energy is the same in all. The force of strength that goes to make the strong man is no whit greater than the force of weakness that goes to make the weak. The energy spent is as great in repression as in expression, in negation as in affirmation, in silence as in sound."[1]

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[1] चेतोहरोऽप्यतिजुगुप्सितो भवेत्
सर्वोऽपि जीवकलया यया विना ।
—*umāsahasram*

It is the ego-sense in us that blinds us to the vision of equal Brahman in all. The ego limits and creates distinctions in all this here which are united in a single formulation. But "it is possible by bringing the real soul to the surface to replace the egoistic standards of pleasure and pain by an equal, an all-embracing personal-impersonal delight. The lover of Nature does this when he takes joy in all the things of Nature universally without admitting repulsion or fear or mere liking and disliking, perceiving beauty in that which seems to others mean and insignificant, bare and savage, terrible and repellent. The artist and the poet do it when they seek the *rasa* of the universal from the aesthetic emotion or from the physical line or from the mental form of beauty or from the inner sense and power alike of that from which the ordinary man turns away and of that to which he is attached by a sense of pleasure.

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[1] Sri Aurobindo: The Life Divine, Book I, Chap. 9.

The seeker of knowledge, the god-lover who finds the object of his love everywhere, the spiritual man, the intellectual, the sensuous, the aesthetic all do this in their own fashion and must do it if they would find embracingly the knowledge, the Beauty, the Joy or the Divinity which they seek".[1]

Thus Kamala is the Goddess of exquisite beauty; *suṣamā* blossoming in everything. What is the significance of the name, *kamalā*? *ka* in Sanskrit denotes the head, the summit, the waters; *mala* comes from the root *mala, malla dhāraṇe*, which means 'to wear'. So *kamala* denotes one who wears the waters as a robe. The Veda has a significant appellation *apovasānā*, robed in waters. What are these waters? Waters *apaḥ* in the Veda, denote the movement, the initial movement of creative activity, the vivifying force, the life-giving essence. These are the divine waters, *āpo daivīh*, the head or the summit from which the creation proceeds, carrying in them the luminous knowledge of the solar world *svarvatīh apaḥ*. This solar world is the world or plane of immortality full of the vast Light of Truth of Savitr, the creative godhead. So the Goddess is aptly called Kamala, clothed in the waters of the creatives consciousness or Kamalatmika, the soul-force immanent in all creative activity, manifesting itself. The Purana picturesquely describes her as arising from the milky ocean when it was churned to yield the nectar of immortality and accosts her as the daughter of the milky ocean, *kṣīra sāgara kanyakā*. Evidently milky ocean is the symbol of the vast stretch of the all-enveloping consciousness, the plane of immortality, the delight of existence swelling with the honied waves *madhumān ūrmiḥ* of the Vedic bard. So she is Indira, the sister of *indu*, the moon, the Soma, the delight of existence, the basic bliss in everything which also the Purana says came out of the milky ocean. She is the play of consciousness, its display outside, the sport of the Supreme Lord, *ramā*. As the refuge and support of all existence, as the underlying current of consciousness, she is *śrī*.

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[1] Sri Aurobindo: The Life Divine, Book I, Chap. 23.

The age of the Vedas was an age of intuition and insight and the words in articulated language were pressed into service to denote these intuitive perceptions of the seer-Rishi. All objects in nature, the entire fauna and flora were used as outward representations symbolising the inner perceptions and the occult phenomena. To the seer, the vast stretch of waters coursing everywhere represented the creative consciousness manifesting in everything. And so the root *ap* to create, from which the Tamil word *appā* has come and the root *amb* to give birth, from which the Sanskrit words *amba, ambaka, ambi, ambika* are formed, were employed to form significantly the names of the waters as *āpaḥ, apaḥ, ambu, ambhaḥ* etc.

Likewise, the lotus flower sprouting from the waters was seen as a living symbol denoting the product of the creative consciousness. As the flower is surrounded by the waters, the term *kamala*, robed in waters, is used to denote it. 'Born of the water', *ambuja, ambhoja, jalaja* etc., are the appellations employed for the flower. It is a flower which raises its head along with the rising sun and droops down with the setting of the sun. It eminently responds to the play of light, symbolising the luminous knowledge of solar Truth. It has numerous petals *śatapatram, sahasrapatram,* manifold parts and it blossoms opening out petal by petal, signifying gradual unfoldment of the latent consciousness in the being. That is why the lotus motif is largely employed in all creative activity, in art, in architecture, in sculpture, in poetry, in philosophy and yoga as well. The Purana says that Brahma from whom all these worlds are born is born from the lotus, *padmasambbava*. Vishnu, the primordial pervasive principle is in superconscient sleep, *yoganidrā* spreading his couch of infinity, *ananta,* on the ocean of inconscience, when for the act of creation, from the nave of the primordial principle, from the navel *nābhi* of Vishnu, the creative consciousness gradually unfolding, that is, a lotus shoots forth. Brahma the creator is born from there and he starts the creation. Similarly the supreme place of Vishnu *paramam padam* is described in the Veda as an eye extended in heaven, *divīva cakṣurātatam*. And so the Purana acclaims Vishnu as *kamalākṣa* lotus-eyed, the watchful eye of preservation luminous with the creative consciousness. Again from the root *sad* to sit, we have the words *sadana, sadma*, meaning a resting place, a house, an abode. Likewise from the root *pad* to stand on foot, we have the word *padma* meaning a foothold. As a foothold, as a nodus of the creative consciousness, the lotus is called by the significant name *padma*. And so in Yoga, the centres of consciousness in the subtle body are described as *padmas*, lotuses. The lotus figure plays a large part in the diagrammatic representations of the occult forces as chakras. And lotus is a common foothold or seat *padmāsana*, prescribed for gods as well as men on the godly path.

Now the significance of the Goddess Kamalatmika being closely associated with the lotus flower in the Tantra, will be clear. She is described as the Lady of the Lotus. She stands on a lotus flower with her two hands holding aloft two lotus flowers. Her other two hands are engaged in the act of warding off fear and granting the boon. Draped in white silk, her luminous complexion is golden.

She is constantly bathed by four huge elephants, white as the snowy mountain, with pots full of the waters of luminous immortality[1]. This contemplation of theGoddess as prescribed in the Tantra reveals how the Vedic thought is clothed in the Tantric imagery. She is Kamala, robed in waters. So she is described as being constantly bathed. Elephants signify sagacity, wisdom, mental movement and activity, the creative principle as manifested in the physical world.

We have already said that the Mantra of the Goddess is the seed-sound *śrim*. She is well propitiated by the Srisukta, a *khila* hymn in the Rig Veda. It is well to notice that the Srisukta contains fifteen Riks and the Goddess is no other than Srividya, the fifteen-lettered *Pañcadaśi* Mantra. Kamala is the antipode of Dhumavati. Dhumavati is the first one, *jyeṣṭha*, the non-existence before creation. Kamala on the other hand is the consciousness in manifestation, the beauty and bliss in expression, in creation. All those who worship harmony and beauty in everything outside as well as in every inward activity, movement and feeling are her servitors. She removes their poverty physical as well as spiritual and endows them with her plenitudes, with her riches, with her opulence. But the Goddess is fleeting by nature and exacting is her Sadhana. Nevertheless, of all the divine powers, she is the most alluring to man; and if he succeeds in establishing her constant presence, he will realise that

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[1] कान्त्या काञ्चनसन्निभां हिमगिरिप्रख्यैः चतुर्भिर्गजैः
हस्तोत्क्षिप्तहिरण्मयामृतघटैरासिच्यमानां श्रियम् ।

बिभ्राणा वरमब्जयुग्ममभयं हस्तैः किरीटोज्ज्वलां
क्षौमाबद्धनितम्बबिम्बललितां वन्देऽरविन्दस्थिताम् ।

> "The world's senseless beauty mirrors God's delight
> That rapture's smile is secret everywhere;
> It flows in the wind's breath, in the tree's sap,
> Its hued magnificence blooms in leaves and
> flowers."[1]

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[1] Sri Aurobindo: Savitri.

CORRESPONDENCE WITH OTHER DISCIPLINES

These, then are the ten great Disciplines, Dasha Mahavidyas, these the resplendent galaxy of the great goddesses in the Cosmos; each governing a particular fundamental function. Dhumavati presides over the Non-Being Asat. When creation starts, Kali is Time and Bhuvaneshwari is Space. The flaming Word Supreme turned towards manifestation is Bhairavi, the Perceiving Word is Tara and the Expressed Word is Matangi. The primordial luminous Desire is Sundari while the delightful Beauty is Kamala. Chinnamasta combines Light and Sound in her thunder-clap and Bagalamukhi stifles the free flow of things. Thus the Tantra portrays the ten facets of the ultimate Reality.

And it is natural for one to search for the source of such lofty conceptions in the Veda. For the Tantric gods and goddesses are not sudden arrivals in the religious scene of the Hindus; they are, on the other hand, gradual evolutions from the original Vedic concepts of the godhead. We are not attempting to find exact correspondences, perfect proto-types of the deities of the Tantra in the Vedic pantheon. Such an attempt is likely not to succeed as the Vedic age was an age of intuition, where feeling and direct perception played a more important part than detailed delineation of name and form determined by mental faculties. We have already shown when dealing with each deity of the Dasha Mahavidyas how certain concepts and realisations of the Vedic seers find a placei n the formulation of the Tantric concepts of those deities. For instance, Agni's power of carrying the aspirant across all tribulations and Aditi's faculty of affording shelter as a ship are built into the conception of Tara though she is patently the form of the immutable Akshara in the high supernals. The primordial darkness covered by darkness, a grand Vedic concept, gives rise to the concept of Dhumavati while the Rig Vedic primal seed of mind, Desire, *kāma*, is amplified as the Kamakala, the concept of Tripurasundari. The all-pervasive indivisible infinity of the Divine Mother Aditi goes to build the concept of Bhuvaneshwari while the mounting aspiration concentrated at the base of things, flaming forth as Agni is the principle of Tripura Bhairavi. Thus there is no one god or goddess in the Veda corresponding exactly to a deity in the group of these ten great Vidyas. Yet the Tantra draws its inspiration from the Vedas and reinforces its perceptions by resorting to Vedic visions just in the same way as the Upanishads clinch an issue by declaring that it is said by the Rik, that it is the perception of the Vedic Seer, *tadṛcābhyuktam, taduktamṛṣiṇā*. Thus, for certain deities, apart from prescribing the Tantric Mantras, the Tantric Seers prescribe for worship *upāsanā*, particular Vedic Riks.

From the writings of Sri Vasishtha Ganapati Muni, we learn about the Vedic Riks that are employed as Mantras to invoke these ten great Deities.

There is the perception of the daughter of Bharadwaja in Gayatri metre about *rātri*: "The Goddess immortal, she fills the vast, the high and the low places; she repels darkness with light"[1]. This is the Rik prescribed for the worship of Kali. There is also another Rik used in the worship. This is the perception of the Seer Saptavadhri Atreya in Anushtub metre: "O Night, disguising the light, may the lightnings of thy divine cloud pour down! May all seeds grow; strike down the haters of the Divine!".[1]

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[1] ओर्वप्रा अमर्त्या निवतो देव्युद्वतः । ज्योतिषा वाधते तमः ॥
—R.V. X. 127. 2.

Tara is appropriately invoked by this Rik: "Fashioning the waters, the Radiant Cow of Speech hath lowed, one-footed, two-footed, yea, four-footed. She of eight feet hath become nine-footed, the thousand immutable letters in the Sky Supernal".[2] This Rik also is used: "The Radiant Cow, the mother of the opulent Maruts, full of inner hearing, pours her milk. Both the carriers of the chariots are yoked".[3]

The third Vidya Sundari has the following Rik for her Mantra: "He (the calf) snorts, by whom encompassed the Ray-Cow makes a bellowing sound clinging to the rain sprinkling cloud. She overpowers the mortal with her consciousness and becoming lightning casts away her covering vesture".[1]

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[1] वर्षन्तु ते विभावरि दिवो अभ्रस्य विद्युतः ।
रोहन्तु सर्वबीजान्यव ब्रह्मद्विषो जहि ॥
—R.V. V. 86. (Appendix).

[2] गौरीर्मिमाय सलिलानि तक्षत्येकपदी द्विपदी सा चतुष्पदी ।
अष्टापदी नवपदी बभूवुषी सहस्राक्षरा परमे व्योमन् ॥
—R.V. I. 164. 41.

[3] गौर्धयति मरुतां श्रवस्युर्माता मघोनाम् ।
युक्ता वह्नी रथानाम् ॥
—R.V. VIII. 94. 1.

Bhuvaneshwari is identified with the vast infinite Aditi and hence this Rik is employed to invoke her: "Aditi is heaven, Aditi is the mid-region, Aditi is the mother, the father and the son. All Gods are Aditi, the fivefold people, Aditi is all that had born, all that is to be born".[2]

Tripura Bhairavi is propitiated by the Rik of Kashyapa to Agni "To the knower of all birth, we press Soma, to him who consumes the knowledge of the enemy. Let Agni carry us across all the obstructions like a boat over the river".[3] The Rik in the Pankti metre as the vision of Vrishakapi about Indrani is the famous Mantra used in the worship of Chinnamasta. "The ancient Woman knows the united invocation made with one mind. The ordainer of the Law of Truth, the mother of herowarriors, Indra's consort is glorified vastly. Indra is above all the cosmos".[1]

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[1] अयं स शिङ्क्ते येन गौरभीवृता
मिमाति मायुं ध्वसनावधिश्रिता ।
सा चित्तिभिर्नि हि चकार मर्त्यं
विद्युद्भवन्ती प्रति वव्रिमौहत ॥

—R.V. I. 164. 29.

[2] अदितिर्द्यौ रदितिरन्तरिक्षमदितिर्माता स पिता स पुत्रः ।
विश्वे देवा अदितिः पञ्चजना अदितिर्जात मदितिर्जनित्वम् ॥

—R.V. I. 89. 10.

[3] जातवेदसे सुनत्राम सोममरातीयतो निदहाति वेदः ।
स नः पर्षदति दुर्गाणि विश्वा नावेव सिन्धुं दुरितात्यग्निः ॥

—R.V. I. 99. 1.

"Let not evil, from high and low, hard to strike, strike us down. Let it take to heels, along with the avidity".[2] Saying this Rik for worship, one propitiates Dhumavati.

Brihaddiva, son of Atharvan, invokes Indra thus: "The eldest was that in the worlds from whence the fierce, the mighty one was born; as soon as born, he destroys the foes, following him all the protectors delight".[3] This is the Mantra prescribed by the Tantra to invoke Bagalamukhi.

Matangi, the Mother of musical speech is invoked by this famous Rik on Saraswati "Great waters, Saraswati makes one conscious by luminous impulsions of knowledge. She enlightens all thoughts".[4]

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[1] संहोत्रं स्म पुरा नारी समनं वाव गच्छति ।
वेधा ऋतस्य वीरिणीन्द्रपत्नी महीयते विश्वस्मादिन्द्र उत्तरः ॥
—R.V. X. 86. 10.

[2] मो षु णः परावरा निर्ऋतिर्दुर्हणा वधीत् ।
पदीष्ट तृष्णया सह ॥
—R.V. I. 38. 6.

[3] तदिदास भुवनेषु ज्येष्ठं यतो जज्ञ उग्रस्त्वेष नृम्णः ।
सद्यो जज्ञानो निरिणाति शत्रूननु यं विश्वे मदन्त्यूमाः ॥
—R.V. X. 120. 1.

[4] महो अर्णः सरस्वती प्रचेतयति केतुना ।
धियो विश्वा विराजति ॥
—R.V. I. 3. 12.

The last of the Dasha Maha Vidyas, Kamalatmika is the soul-force immanent in all creative activity; so she is invoked by the famous Mantra dedicated to Savitr, the force of the creative Godhead *Savitri*. "We hold in thought that excellent effulgence of the God Savitr. May he impel our thoughts".[1]

Are these Vidyas mentioned in the Upanishads? Because Upanishads are not merely philosophical speculations about the ultimate Reality, as popularly held, but are manuals of Sadhana, practical guides for the realisation of the Divine. There are many Vidyas mentioned in the Upanishads and these are discussed in the Brahma Sutras of Badarayana. But unlike the later Tantra Shastra, the Upanishads do not describe the procedure of the particular Sadhana or Vidya, neither do they give any details. The Vidya is named after the teacher of the Vidya or the initiate or its central aspect and a few hints are given in regard to the object of realisation and its fruit. We owe it to Sri Vasishtha Ganapati Muni for tracing the Tantric Dasha Maha Vidyas to their source in the Upanishads. With the aid of his perception, let us give in some detail the correlation found in the body of certain Upanishadic Vidyas.

King Janashruti Pautrayana, having learnt from the talk of swans flying over his couch in the night that Raikwa of the cart was superior to him in wisdom, repaired to the lowly Raikwa in search of true knowledge and learnt from him the Samvarga Vidya. This story is related in the fourth Prapathaka of the Chandogya

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[1] तत्सवितुर्वरेण्यं भर्गो देवस्य धीमहि ।
धियो यो नः प्रचोदयात् ॥

—R.V. III. 62. 10.

Upanishad. What is Samvarga? That which appropriates, absorbs, consumes, takes everything into itself is Samvarga.[1] The Upanishad teaches that Vayu in the gods and Prana in the beings are the two Samvargas. Verily, everything is contained in Vayu and in Prana. Vayu is not mentioned in the sense of mere wind, neither Prana in the sense of mere life. It is the dynamis of the Divine, the Conscious Power permeating the whole space that causes all manifestation. It is the Supreme Life that is the life of all lives making all activity and movement possible. It is this cosmic force of Prana (Vayu) which the Tantric acclaims as Kali.

The Vidya of Tara can be easily traced to the Akshara Vidya mentioned in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad (III. 8) During the sacrifice of enormous gifts, performed by Janaka, the king of Videhas, Rishi Yajnavalkya tried to carry away the prize intended for the best knower of Brahman, whereupon one after another in the assembly began to ply him with questions. Gargi Vachaknavi asked : " If Akasha is the warp and woof of everything, what is Akasha made of, what is its texture ? ". " This is verily that immutable " *etat vai tadakṣaram*, came the answer. Affirmed by a series of negations like ' this is neither gross nor subtle, neither short nor long ' etc., this Akshara Brahman is the immutable Word of perception, the Tara of the Tantrics.

" In all worlds, in all beings, in all selves, he eats the food." [2] In these terms the Upanishad (Chandogya VI. 11. 18.) describes the glory of Vaishwanara Vidya. Vaishwanara is the Universal Male, the Purusha, the Universal Fire which is the self in each and the all. King Ashwapati Kaikeya was pleased with the approach of the Brahmins led by Uddalaka who craved for knowledge from him, a Kshatriya though he was, inferior to them in social rank. He individually questioned them and learnt that they were worshipping the parts of the *ātman* mistaking them for the whole. He then taught them the discipline of worshipping the Universal Person, which will lead them to the realisation of the Cosmic Self in each being. The Tantra calls this Cosmic self as Tripurasundari, the beautiful presiding over the triad, at the same time immanent in the triad, the universal consciousness immanent as the essence in the microcosm as well as in the macrocosm. The Vaishwanara Vidya of the Upanishad has a remote antiquity as it is correlated to the worship of Agni Vaishwanara as extolled in the Riks of the Rig Veda. And the Vidya of Sundari having its source in Vaishwanara Vidya is rightly famous as *śrī vidyā, the* knowledge, the knowledge leading to the realisation of the cosmic consciousness in each and every being.

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[1] संवर्जनात् संग्रहणात् संग्रसनाद्वा संवर्गः ।

—Acharya Shankara.

[2] सः सर्वेषु लोकेषु सर्वेषु भूतेषु सर्वेषु आत्मसु अन्नं अत्ति ॥

Bhuvaneshwari, the supreme sovereign of the worlds is the Space that contains and sustains, the goal and refuge of all manifestations. The discipline leading to her Sadhana corresponds to the Parovariyasi Vidya of the Upanishad (Chandogya I. 9). Silaka, Chaikitayana and Pravahana, all proficient in the lore of *udgītha* go on discussing about successive goals, *gati.* The goal of Saman, they find is Swara; the goal of Swara, they realise is Prana and thus finally tracing the successive goals they arrive at the supreme, most excellent *parovarīya*, the seniormost of all, the ultimate goal, the refuge *parāyaṇam,* the *ākāśa* space which is endless, *ananta.*

Shandilya Vidya in the Upanishad (Chandogya III. 14) corresponds to the Vidya of Tripura Bhairavi. Shandilya is a great teacher of *agni rahasya*, the secret of the mystic Fire. The mystic Fire is extolled as *kavikratu*, the seer-will in Rig Veda and the exhortation contained in Shandilya Vidya is that "he should make the resolve", *sa kratum kurvīta*. This resolve is a firm will with a fixed idea and sense of certainty, a concentrated force of energy *tapas*, an unwavering flame of resolute aspiration. One should worship with calmness knowing that all this is Brahman and all is born from it, merges into it and breathes by it *sarvam khalvidam brahma tajjalānīti śānta upāsīta*. In the Tantra, Tripura Bhairavi is the fire of aspiration that burns in Muladhara, the force of concentrated *tapas*, the resolute will resulting in action *kriyā śakti.*

In Brihadaranyaka Upanishad (Adhyaya IV) we find the Sage Yajnavalkya communicating the discipline of Jyotirvidya to the king Janaka. "Like the hair a thousand times divided there are *nādis* (nerve channels) called *hitāḥ* established in the inner heart. Proceeding by these nerve channels the food proceeds. There is food more subtle than that from the body of the soul."[1] And then the soul is extolled as Jyoti, Light. If we recall that in the Dasha Maha Vidyas, Chinnamasta represents the Light of the thunder-flash, Vajravairochaniya, the might of Indra's force spreading herself along myriads of channels enveloping the whole cosmos and in the human body as the Sushumna Nadi entering the heart with its myriad branches, we easily see the concordance between the Vidya of Chinnamasta and the Jyotirvidya.

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[1] यथा केशः सहस्रधा भिन्न एवमस्यैतां हिता नाम नाड्योऽन्तर्हृदये प्रतिष्ठिता भवन्त्येव ताभिर्वा एतदास्रवदास्रवति तस्मादेष प्रविविक्ताहारतर इवैष भवति अस्मात् शारीरादात्मनः ।

The first and foremost state before creation when darkness was covered by darkness and all this was an ocean of inconscience is given the name Dhumavati. The power of Dhumavati is reflected in ordinary existence as sleep, lassitude, inertness and forgetfulness. The worship of Dhumavati is prescribed so as to ferry across darkness towards its shore of light, to wade through forgetfulness and lassitude to a constant memory and active awareness. The Dhumavati Vidya corresponds to the Bhuma Vidya of the Upanishad (Chandogya VII) wherein it is declared that the blessed Sanatkumara shows the shore beyond darkness, *tamasas pāram darśayati bhagavān sanatkumāraḥ*. The requisite of Sadhana is a strong and constant remembrance *dhruvā smṛti* earned by purification of the stuff of the instrumental being *sattva śuddhi;* then Bhuma, the Plenum, the Infinite Self is realised.[1]

The Taittiriya Upanishad (Sikshavalli. 6) imparts the secret discipline of Indra Yoni Vidya. Describing the Purusha who is all mind, the golden immortal in the heart-space within, it proceeds to explain that the womb of Indra is between the two palates, hanging down like the breast of a woman *antareṇa tāluke ya eṣa stana ivāvalambate sendrayoniḥ*. To stifle activity, one has to concentrate on Indra yoni, the effulgent symbol *taijasa lingam* hanging at the root of the tongue. This Vidya corresponds to the Vidya of Bagalamukhi, the paralysing Power, the stifling Shakti of the Divine, *sarva stambhanakari*.

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[1] For an illuminating study of this Vidya and other important Vidyas of the Upanishads, the reader is directed to the writings of Sri Kapal Sastriar especially to his book "Lights on the Upanishads".

Matangi the ninth of the Dasha Maha Vidyas, is the articulated word, the word that is manifested as expression. Her discipline has the origin in the Udgitha Vidya of the Upanishads. " One should wait in worship on the letter OM, *udgitha* " begins the Chandogya Upanishad. Why Om is known as *udgītha?* It is sung in a high pitch *omiti hyudgāyati*, hence the name Udgitha, says the Upanishad. The Mandukya Upanishad deals with this extensively. Om is eternal, Om is all this, Om is the word of affirmation, the expression of assent. " With Om Brahma begins creation " *omiti brahmā prasauti* says the Taittiriya.

Now we come to the last of the Dasha Maha Vidyas, the Vidya of Kamalatmika. Kamalatmika is the consciousness in manifestation, the beauty in expression, the underlying delight and bliss in creation. Her Vidya corresponds to the Madhu Vidya as detailed in the Madhu Brahmana of the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad (II.5) This doctrine of the Mystic Honey was imparted by the sage Dadhyan at the risk of his life to the twin Gods Ashwins. Dadhyan who got the teaching from Indra could not reveal it as he ran the peril of his head being cut off. The Ashwins, the story goes, in order to circumvent this, cut off at the first instance, the head of Dadhyan, fixed a horse's head on him and got the Vidya. When Indra smashed with his thunder-bolt the horse-head of Dadhyan for breach of promise, the Ashwins promptly restored to Dadhyan his original head. The teaching looks upon world-existence as a creation of Delight, an Existence which subsists by interdependence of the whole and the part, a manifestation which subsists because of the Honey, the Madhu in it, because of the basic bliss immanent in all things

Having outlined the correspondence between the Upanishadic Vidyas and Dasha Mahavidyas, let us now turn our attention to the Puranas. In the Puranas are described the various forms, emanations and manifestations of the gods and goddesses. Whenever there happens a crisis of cosmic magnitude, whenever everything that is held worthy and sacred seems to be lost, when the hostile forces that retard the progress of humanity gain the upper hand and the balance of power seems to be tilted in their favour, in sheer despair the entire earth aspires, the whole humanity fervently prays and invokes the godhead. Then in response, the Divine descends, restores normalcy and gives the necessary push to the earth and its inhabitants for a better advancement, for a more rapid stride on the path of evolution. This is known as *avatāra*, descent. When this happens, there is a general uplift in the earth's consciousness, a greater progress achieved by the evolving humanity. Any god or goddess can descend and they do descend for the fulfilment of the cosmic purpose. But as the world's preservation and maintenance are in the hands of Vishnu, the all-pervasive principle of protection of the Supreme, his descents are epoch-making and justly famous. A descent of the deity is for the performance of a specific cosmic act and no act is possible if it is not backed up by the necessary force, Shakti. Every Avatara has his Shakti and the *avatāra kārya*, the purpose of the Avatara is fulfilled by the Shakti. As Vishnu's Avataras are famous as ten in number, it is natural to seek a correspondence of the Avatara Shaktis, the Powers behind the Descents to the ten great cosmic Powers, Dasha Mahavidyas. In one or two Avataras, the Power that motivates is evident. For instance, in the Avatara of Parasurama, his mother Renuka is the decisive

Power, the Avatara Shakti. In all esoteric circles, Krishna and Kali are identified as the Shakta and his Shakti. The seed-sound of Krishna is *klīm* while that of Kali is *krīm* and there is very little difference between *r* and *l*—*ralayor-abhedaḥ*. In the Bhagavata itself it is mentioned that the manifestation of Kali is mistaken to be the manifestation of Krishna by Kamsa who tries to kill the child. Taking the cue from these instances, some of the Tantras like *muṇḍamālā tantra* have sought a correspondence between the *avatāras* and the great cosmic goddesses. Though the correspondence of the Vidyas to the Avataras is not in the same order, it is interesting to note that an attempt has been made to find a correspondence and we shall mention these for what they are worth.

Kali corresponds to Krishna's force. Both are dark in complexion. Krishna's mission on earth was to eradicate all evil forces, force a *kurukṣetra* field of action for evolution on a hesitating humanity represented by Arjuna and to open the heart, the seat of true emotion of the aspiring humanity to the godhead who had come on earth to entice the yearning souls by his love, beauty and harmony. Tara was behind the Avatara of Rama. The *rāma nāma* is famous as the *tāraka mantra*, the mystic word that makes one cross all the troubles and tribulations in the world. Rama crossed the barriers of his kingdom, crossed the forests, hills and dales, crossed the ocean. An exemplar in human conduct, he crossed the conventions of ordinary humanity. The low caste hunter, Guha, was his friend. Bears, monkeys and birds were his mates. He made them all cross from the shore of darkness to that of light. The Shakti behind the Avatara, Varaha, the divine Boar that dug deep to uplift the earth on its snout is Bhuvaneshwari, the Mother of the Worlds, enveloping the whole earth with her mantle of space. The Shakti manifested in the Avatara of Nrisimha is the terrible Mother, Tripura Bhairavi, the burning energy *tapas* that shoots forth and destroys all evil when the pent-up power is released. Tripura Bhairavi is terrible to the evil doer, but not to the aspirant whose fear she removes. Narasimha also was terrifying to Hiranyakasipu, but not to Prahlada whom he came to save. The Avatara as the dwarf-man, Vamana, indicates the quiescent state before the godhead burst forth as Trivikrama, the Vast One with his triple strides. The Shakti operating through this Avatara is evidently Dhumavati, the state of inconscience, when the Being is dwarfed and appears to be the Non-Being. Parasurama who systematically cut with his axe the haughty heads of states, the arrogant *kṣatriyas* of old, had behind him the force of Chinnamasta, the goddess with the severed head. Chinnamasta descended into his mother Renuka when he cut her head, as the story goes, at the behest of his father. Kamalatmika, robed in the waters of consciousness, the beauty and sign of the Divine that blossom all around is the Shakti behind the Avatara Matsya, the Primordial Fish in the vivifying waters of creation. Bagalamukhi, the stifling Shakti, the stilling force is behind Kurmavatara, the Divine Tortoise that lies still and motionless withdrawing all its limbs into itself. The word that has been cast out, the Vaikhari Vak, is Matangi; known as *ucchiṣṭa cāṇḍālī*. She is the force, the Tantra says, behind the Avatara of Buddha, the Enlightened One who had to come out of the traditional beliefs to express and articulate the message of Truth. In the coming Avatara of Kalki, the harbinger of harmonies, who will traverse the earth on his white steed of strong plenitudes and swift knowledge, the Tantra acclaims the force of Tripurasundari, the immanent consciousness in all things in the triple world, who is famed as *śrividyā the* knowledge, as *ṣoḍaśī,* the integral discipline with all its sixteen parts, *kalās.*[1]

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[1] कृष्णस्तु कालिका साक्षात् राममूर्तिश्च तारिणी ।
वराहो भुवना प्रोक्ता नृसिंहो मैरवीश्वरी ॥
धूमावती वामनः स्यात् छिन्ना भृगुकुलोद्भवः ।
कमला मत्स्यरूपः स्यात् कूर्मस्तु बगलामुखी ॥
मातङ्गी बौद्ध इत्येषा षोडशी कल्किरूपिणी ॥
—मुण्डमाला तन्त्रे

SADHANA

Under each chapter on the different deities of the Dasha Mahavidyas, we have already outlined the particular Sadhana eminently suitable to acquire the grace of the particular deity. Here we shall discuss the general ways of Sadhana that are applicable to all the Vidyas.

The Tantra Shastra takes man and the world as they are and not as they should be. Man is taken up in his totality and all parts of his being are given their due share in the Sadhana. Following the Vedic Seers, the Tantra considers man as the offspring of Earth and Heaven, matter and spirit. He cannot deny his parentage either from the one or from the other. Cultivating a sense of other-worldliness and pursuing exclusively the things of the spirit is not what is sought for. The life here has to be accepted and the essential Delight derived from the enjoyment of life has to be sensed. Both *bhukti*, enjoyment and *mukti* release are the aims of the Sadhana, Therefore in the path, nothing is excluded, nothing is rejected. Man is accepted with all his failings and imperfections and the very things that degrade him are employed to uplift him in the Sadhana. The Tantra has devised various means of worship appropriate to the nature of the aspirant according to his competence *adhikāra*. It recognises man firstly as a *paśu*, the inert unregenerate being with animal instincts predominant. Worship is prescribed for such a common man and by the dint of worship itself, he flowers into the *rājasic* man, full of vigour and activity, the hero-warrior *vīra* who proceeds on the path with his undaunted will. By following the means of worship suited to his competency, the *vīra* evolves into the *divya*, the godman who with his satwic maturity and unfailing power facilitates the advent of the gods on earth.

Basing on such a classification, the Tantra has devised two main *mārgas*, two paths of discipline to reach the same goal *vāma mārga* and *dakṣiṇa mārga*. These are the famous Left-Hand and Right-Hand Paths or more correctly the Way of Delight and the Way of Knowledge. It will be quite misleading to discuss the superiority of one *mārga* over the other, as both are devised to suit the difference in competency, *adhikāri bedha* of the Sadhaka. From early times, both the paths have been treated with equal respect, though later on *vāma mārga* has been much misunderstood and maligned. This is not a little due to the votaries of *vāma mārga* who have brought the path itself into disrepute by not understanding the symbolic meaning and spiritual significance of the external sensory objects with which they have to conduct the worship. Only a *vīra*, a hero-warrior is competent to follow the *vāma mārga* which is described as perilous as riding on a tiger's back, as dangerous as walking on razor's edge. The least deviation from the path is enongh to cause the downfall of the Sadhaka. Rightly practised, *vāma mārga* leads one from the gross to the subtle, making one sense the essential Delight in all existence.

In certain quarters, it is customary to classify the deities of the Dasha Mahavidyas into two families, those belonging to Kali and the others belonging to Sri, Lalita Tripurasundari – *kāli kulam*, *śrīkulam*. Deities like Chinnamasta, Bagalamukhi and Dhumavati are grouped with Kali, while Bhuvaneswari, Matangi, Kamalatmika and the like are classified with Lalita Tripurasundari. This classification is based on the grouping of similar cosmic qualities represented by the deities of the various Vidyas. It is alright so far; but when it is said that Kalikulam are the deities of Vama Marga and Srikulam the deities of Dakshina Marga, it is a gross mis-statement. For one thing, the path pertains to the Sadhaka and not to the Deity. It is true that Vama Marga is eminently suited to the worship of Kali; but nowhere it is said that the Terrible Mother cannot be propitiated by Dakshina Marga. In fact, in the worship of Lalita Tripurasundari, there are various names mentioned in the Lalita Sahasranama to indicate that the auspicious Mother of Grace can be propitiated by both the paths. She is *virārādhyā*, worshipped by the hero-warrior; at the same time she is *dakṣiṇā-dakṣiṇārādhya, savyāpasavya mārgasthā*, propitiated by both the left-hand and right-hand paths.

Kali is the dark terrible Mother spreading death and devastation all around. Sundari is the red beautiful Mother of Grace enveloping the whole existence with her mantle of Love and Delight. Both the deities seem to be so different and it seems natural that the Dasha Mahavidyas should fall into two distinct groups headed by them as *kālīkulam* and *śrīkulam*. But if we are able to go beyond the appearances, the underlying unity in the concept of both the deities is quite staggering.

Kali represents the concept of Time, *kāla*, in the cosmic creation. She is worshipped as the Time-Force and hence her name *kālī*. Sundari too represents the concept of Time, the aggregate of the sixteen parts, *kalās*, from the first day to the full moon—*pratipanmukhya rākānta*, the days constantly recurring *tithi nityās*. These *tithi nityās* comprise the fifteen-lettered Mantra, *pañcadaśi*, the crowning sixteenth letter, *ṣoḍaśī* being Sundari herself, famed as *māhānityā*. Kali is reputed to be mounted on a corpse, *śavārūḍhā*. Sundari too is seated on the corpse. Only in the case of Sundari, there are five corpses *pañca pretāsanāsīnā*. In both the cases, the corpse is that of Shiva or of the five forms, Brahma, Vishnu, Rudra, Isana and Sadasiva representing the inert static Brahman over which the Divine Dynamis has its play. Kali, in her ferocious form of Chandi is famed as the nine Durgas, *nava durgā* and her Mantra as the famous nine-lettered *navākṣarī*. Sundari's Mantra too is composed of only nine distinct letters *ka ė i la ha sa ra, ardhacandra* and *bindu,*[1] and this *navākṣarī* is known as *meru*, the nine triangles *navakoṇa* comprising the Sri Chakra.

Kali is terrible, no doubt; but she has her benign form as well. She is the auspicious Bhadrakali. Tripurasundari is all beauty and grace; but she has her terrible form as well. She is the terrific Tripura, Tripurabhairavi. In the cosmic set-up Kali denotes Hunger, Death *aśanāya mṛtyuḥ* that swallows up everything while Sundari represents Desire, the motive force that takes everything in its sweep.

Thus, there is an essential unity in the concept of these two great Deities and both the paths of Left-hand and Right-hand worship are equally applicable in the case of all the ten great cosmic goddesses.

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[1] The Mantra *pancadasi* can be reduced to these nine letters, by leaving out the letters that are repeated.

SYNTHESIS

It is the Supreme Shakti who is spoken of as the ten great cosmic Powers just in the same way as the vast stretch of space is described as comprising the ten directions. This does not mean that all these Powers are one and the same. They are quite distinct and different and at the same time have an underlying unity. The Many are as real as the One and it is possible to see a synthesis, a unity in diversity. These great cosmic Powers are so many facets of the Supreme Shakti presiding over the various cosmic functions.

If creation has to start, the Supreme Transcendent Absolute has to assume certain poises, which become the cosmic Powers effectuating the manifestation. These poises are described variously. It may be a stir, a vibration a sound *nāda* which is the precursor of creation. The supreme stir, ready for manifestation, known as *parā vāk* is the great cosmic Power — Tripura Bhairavi. When the stir develops and perceives the coming creation as *paśyanti vāk*, it is Tara and when it is actually expressed and articulated as *vaikharī vāk*, it is Matangi. Again, if Desire is the cause of creation, it is Tripura Sundari. The Infinite when it subjects itself to measurement becomes delimited by position and event, by space as Bhuvaneshwari and by Time as Kali. The stupendous Force that precipitates the creation by almost cutting it off from the creator is Chinnamasta. When all the powers are held in check, it is the force of Bagalamukhi that is in creation; and when all the powers are expressed in manifestation, it is the play of Kamalatmika. The state preceding the creation, Non-Being is Dhumavati. Thus, the ten great cosmic Powers are behind the cosmic functions.

One can worship Kali and get to understand the role of Time. Another can adore Sundari and realise that Desire is the prime mover in the cosmos. Each discipline is a Brahma Vidya and leads to the ultimate Supreme Shakti. It is true that by means of a particular discipline, one realises a particular facet of the Supreme. But the realisation at one point does not preclude the realisations at other points. Realisation through one discipline makes the knowledge of other disciplines easily available and one is able to have in course of time a global realisation of the Total Divine.

Whatever is in the macrocosm is as well in the microcosm. The different planes from where the cosmic functions come into play have their correspondence in the beings that are in creation. For instance, in the human being, there are different planes and parts, quite distinct, at the same time co-ordinating into a harmonious unit of the whole being. These planes are governed by conscious centres and sources of the dynamic powers of the being which act as focal points for the consciousness to operate. These centres, picturesquely known as *cakras,* wheels of power, or *padmas,* lotuses, ready to unfold are situated in the subtle body and are arranged in an ascending series from the lowest physical to the highest mind centre and spiritual centre. Tripura Bhairavi, the Terrible Mother in the form of the fiery Serpent Kundalini, the coiled up energy, the pent-up fire of *tapas* is realised in the base-centre *mūlādhāra*. In the centre of larger life-forces, in *manipūraka*, the realisation of Tara takes place. The dynamic play of Kali is felt in the heart-centre in *anāhata*, the seat of all true emotions; in the back-ground space Bhuvaneshwari is ever present. In the throat-centre, *viśuddhi* the centre of expression and vocalisation, Matangi reveals herself. In the centre between the eye-brows, in the *ājñā*, the centre governing will and vision, Chinnamasta reigns and in the centre at the summit, in the thousand-petalled lotus, *sahasradala padma* are realised the Love and Bliss of Tripurasundari. Thus all the planes of the being are governed by the Cosmic Powers. If these powers are held in check, Bagalamukhi is in operation; and if they are in full play, it is the grace of Kamalatmika. When one is oblivious of all these planes and is steeped in Samadhi, one is in the presence of Dhumavati.

> "At the beginning of each far-spread plane
> Pervading with her power the cosmic suns
> She reigns, inspirer of its multiple works
> And thinker of the symbol of its scene.
> Above them all she stands supporting all,
> The sole omnipotent Goddess ever-veiled
> Of whom the world is the inscrutable mask;
> The ages are the footfalls of her tread
> Their happenings the figure of her thoughts
> And all creation is her endless act." [1]

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[1] Sri Aurobindo: Savitri II. 14.

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